James L. Mc Lee
1858

A

PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAY

ON

CREDULITY AND SUPERSTITION;

AND ALSO ON

ANIMAL FASCINATION, OR CHARMING.

BY RUFUS BLAKEMAN, M. D.

"It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him; for the one is unbelief, the other is contumely."

LORD BACON.

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON & CO., BROADWAY.
NEW HAVEN,—S. BABCOCK.
1849.

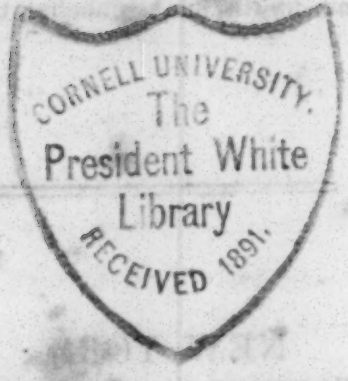
7441B16

A9627

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1849,

By Rufus Blakeman, M. D.,

in the Office of the Clerk of the District Court of Connecticut.



PREFACE.

It was not the original design of the author to offer the following work to the public. It was undertaken with the view to note his own opinions, and such facts, derived from reading and reflection, as were deemed demonstrative of a general tendency to a more ready belief in the incomprehensible and the marvelous, rather than in phenomena susceptible of explanation by reason, aided by a disciplined exercise of the subordinate senses. Subsequently, however, it occurred to him that their dissemination might possibly have some influence in leading to an analytical examination of various popular errors emanating from this source, which have been most detrimental to human progress, and have essentially retarded mankind in their efforts to acquire the greatest happiness of which their nature is susceptible.

If such should be the result, (though but in a small degree,) it is confidently believed that much will be effected toward the eradication of evils originating from credulity and superstition. There is little doubt that the baleful errors originating from these sources have mainly been perpetuated by traditional authority, or the habitual quiescence in which the mind is too prone to indulge, when the various external phenomena are presented for its con-

templation and reception; and, therefore, that attention to their deformity is only required for their correction.

The author has not the arrogance to claim, that he is presenting a mass of original views to those who have read or thought extensively on the subjects considered. It has been his principal design to present, in a succinct form, opinions and many important facts dispersed through a variety of volumes, which a majority of society either want the leisure or interest to peruse; but who, notwithstanding, have a personal interest that errors perpetuated by such inattention, and which are most detrimental to their welfare, should be corrected, and thereby their evils become dissipated.

It has been the author's object to allude to the mental origin of the various popular superstitions that have extensively prevailed among mankind at different periods, and briefly to illustrate the physiological and mental influences by which they have been fostered and strengthened—often to such a degree as to assume the direction of popular belief and the general sentiment of mankind during their usurpations.

Although the several subjects discussed have been ably investigated by various writers, it is not within the author's knowledge, that the different forms of credulity and superstition of which he treats, have been presented in connection, accompanied by a reference to the physiological and pathological principles upon which they are manifestly dependent. It is true that the physical origin of mental delusion has been repeatedly investigated; but it has, generally, been in a manner too metaphysical to

be readily comprehended by all, and, as before remarked, too formidable from extent to admit of ready access by the public generally. He therefore hopes, by the publication of this manual, to present the outlines of the subject in such accessible form as may invite perusal, and thereby incite some to a further investigation of truths, upon a correct understanding of which, it is conceived, refined civilization can alone be based.

It was the wish of the author so to popularize his treatise, by entirely excluding technical language, as to render it more readily intelligible to every reader. But as it has been his design to trace the errors, originating in the subjects discussed, to their physiological and pathological origin, he has been compelled, occasionally, to resort to the use of the technicalities of science, with the view as well to abridge in diction as to facilitate the object contemplated. He would, therefore, present this as an apology to the non-professional reader for the occasional reference to, and introduction of these. It is, however, hoped that the present liberal dissemination of physiological and other sciences, with the explanations generally given in connection with their use, will in some degree obviate the difficulties which he is aware must arise from their employment.

Without pretensions to literary merit in its structure, the work is respectfully submitted to the public, by the

AUTHOR.

Greenfield Hill, September 4th, 1849.

CONTENTS.

SECTION I.

Mental Origin of Credulity and Superstition, and its Influence on Ancient Society, - - - - - - - - - - 9

SECTION II.

Witchcraft, - - - - - - - - - - - - - 47

SECTION III.

Dreams, - - - - - - - - - - - - - 58

SECTION IV.

Ghosts, - - - - - - - - - - - - - 65

SECTION V.

Ecstacy, Trance, &c., - - - - - - - - - 74

SECTION VI.

Empiricism and Quackery—Credulity in Medicine, - - - - 103

SECTION VII.

Homœopathy, - - - - - - - - - - - 123

SECTION VIII.

Mesmerism, - - - - - - - - - - - 161

Essay on Animal Fascination, or Charming, - - - - - 177

PHILOSOPHY

OF

CREDULITY AND SUPERSTITION.

SECTION I.

Mental Origin of Credulity and Superstition, and its Influence on Ancient Society.

The remark of Lord Bacon, that "it were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such opinion as is unworthy of Him," is most appropriate in its application to the various superstitious beliefs that have, and still, in a degree, sway mankind; for superstition implies such extravagant notions regarding the character of Deity, that its rational contemplation is irreconcilable with such conceptions formed of the Author of the universe, as are derived from a survey of its structure.

On the contrary, such is the influence of these beliefs on the mind, that they not only cause the character of the infinitely wise and rational Intelligence there delineated, to be graduated by a standard derived from ordi-

nary human attributes, but they often degrade such Being, by attributing to his character qualities like those presented from a survey of human nature in its most repulsive manifestations.

If such are the facts furnished from an observation of the effects of credulity and superstition, it is manifest that the moral and social, as well as the religious interests of man, require that their true nature should be represented in such a form, that the evils arising therefrom may be exposed, and, if possible, obliterated.

That man is by nature a credulous being, requires but the proofs which history furnishes of his race in all the conditions in which he is noticed by that record.

That he is likewise superstitious, and prone to allow an undue influence to the imagination and the passions, is equally manifest from observation of his character, whether presented in a state of barbarism or of civilization.

The universal prevalence of these propensities, conclusively shows that, instead of being foreign and accidental manifestations, they are indebted for their existence to the original structure of the mind itself. It will therefore appear, that however diverse may be the character of superstition and credulity, in comparison with legitimate mental

deduction, still each must have received an origin from the natural tendency and associations which result from the mental organization. But as the former, so often fraught with evils to mankind, can not reasonably be imputed to the Divine economy in furnishing endowments to man, they must necessarily be explained by viewing them as perverted operations of some of the elementary principles of the mind, which were, no doubt, designed by the Creator to elevate man to the exalted position in the universe for which he was manifestly introduced into being.

In a survey of human character, in connection with the mental faculties, we shall find that all its manifestations derive their origin from, and are dependent upon, specific elements of the mind; and that, however great the diversity exhibited in human character, it is to be referred to a varied operation of a few elementary principles, constituting the entire mental organization.

Man is so constituted that he is by nature a social being. Hence a large portion of his happiness is made dependent upon his association with his fellow man in society. He would be unable to attain this boon of the social state, were he not endowed with the disposition to repose confidence in his fellow man, with whom he is necessarily associated in his various relations.

Disruptions of society must occur from the antagonistic character of its elements, and its existence would inevitably be but a state of destructive conflict, were man not endowed with faculties for its maintenance. The happiness which he derives from the social state would be annihilated, and even governments could not be sustained, was he not by nature gifted with an inclination to confide in his fellow beings. Such must inevitably have been his gloomy condition, had the mind been without those elementary constituents which originate the social affinities, and prompt to a sympathetic amalgamation and confidence in the mental affection of its associates.

Man, by nature, is endowed with an eager propensity for novelty, and an ardent desire to acquire a knowledge of his external relations in the varied conditions of his existence. As a result of its exercise, his social and physical relations become extended and ameliorated, and he is enabled to protect himself against the hostile agencies by which he is surrounded.

Not content with the knowledge acquired by the investigation of the immediate objects of sense, this passion for the novel and singular, influences the mind to pass beyond these, and to attempt a discovery of the character, as well of objects concealed in the remote recesses of infinite space, as of that of the

invisible agencies which he is conscious are in perpetual operation around him.

The conclusions of reason regarding the Architect of nature, have unquestionably contributed essential aid in the construction of the vague notions which superstition presents, relative to his character and attributes; and therefore reason has, in a large degree, been instrumental in effecting a degradation of the mental faculties, which it was its legitimate office to elevate and ennoble.

In its contemplation of the works of nature, natural reason has ever detected, throughout their entire structure, the most manifest evidence of a wise designing Architect, whose attributes, from their vast extent, baffled its power of comprehension. From a reluctance, however, to abandon a research into the nature of a Being whose existence is there so manifestly demonstrated, notwithstanding its inadequate powers, it has ever been inclined, through the promptings of its natural arrogance and inquisitiveness, to estimate and define the character and attributes of such exalted Intelligence, by a standard furnished by observation on the character of the limited intelligences with which it was familiar.

As might be rationally presumed, from an estimate of the insufficient data on which its conclusions were based, unaided reason has

ever depicted the character of the Creative Intelligence with the imperfections incident to human nature; and thus, instead of bestowing due homage on the great First Cause, has rendered its adorations to the factitious etchings of its own conception.

Hence it will be found, that among the various tribes and communities of man, unenlightened by revelation, the respective imaginative divinities which they worship, have ever been represented as possessing endowments bearing a similitude to ordinary human nature, and with a character and attributes varying in correspondence with the national public sentiment of each community; with the distinction, mainly, that such divinities have been depicted with powers greatly enhanced over their human prototypes, and generally of a capriciousness of affections bearing a relation with their superior ability for gratification. Possessing, therefore, such peculiar structure, and holding a position in the universe amid such subtle influences as are presented in the operation of the natural laws, which the senses are totally inadequate to define, it might be expected that the mind, when injudiciously abandoning its legitimate province, without an extra-natural light, like that of revelation, should be shipwrecked amid the errors into which it must in such a condition be plunged.

Such, it is conceived, are the principal mental influences which have been instrumental in leading the mind to a degradation of its own innate capabilities, and caused a depreciation of the standard of human nature, which, under a more auspicious direction, might have been in an uninterrupted progress of elevation.

These elementary affections of the mind, essential alike to maintain the social and progressive state of man, when subservient to a duly disciplined reason, are most effective in the elevation of human character. But through an unfortunate perversion of their objects it is unquestionable, that the same original tendencies have been productive of that morbid credulity and superstition which have ever depressed the intellect of man, and been productive of a large portion of the woes and evils which his race has endured.

All assemblages of man in society, whether savage or civilized, have ever been more or less victims to credences which derive no support from the legitimate conclusions of the reasoning faculty; nor are they even sustained by evidence afforded by the unbiased operation of the senses. Such credences, being deductions from data which have not been sufficiently subjected to the scrutiny of the senses, are too apt to assume the guidance of the conduct of

their devotees, by the influence of the erroneous standards which they furnish; and hence, to mould the character in accordance with the false basis which has been assumed.

That propensity of the mind which leads it to an investigation of its external relations, embarrassed by the inability of reason to explain all the mysterious phenomena with which it is connected in the universe around it, such as those of electricity, affinity, gravitation, earthquakes, &c., has caused it to attribute such to the agency of invisible personalities with which its destinies were intimately connected, and upon which it was dependent for a large portion of the happiness which it enjoys, or the misery which it suffers.

It is to be presumed, that during the successive periods of the existence of the human race, the notions of the untaught mind regarding its external relations, have been extremely crude and indefinite, and that the character of its views regarding these would be such as the passions, influenced by a prolific imagination, would create. The character of the human mind has doubtless ever possessed a uniformity in the entire species, and it is a legitimate presumption, that the influences derived from external agencies would be attended with a uniformity of results in every period of the history of the race. It is

therefore presumable, that the mind, in its uncultivated state, from such similarity of impressions from without, should be inspired to a uniformity of conclusions, and that similar opinions and systems would result from a contemplation of external nature.

It is probable, that in all periods of the earth's existence in its present form, the various causes of phenomena now manifested were in active operation; and that such phenomena have been, in different degrees, exhibited to man in every condition in which his race has been found since its origin. Indeed, it is geologically shown, that many of the most potent agencies of nature have been in much greater activity than at the present period. The numerous extinct volcanoes discovered in every country, the visible and historic disruptions of the earth's surface, and the upheavings of mountains and islands, show conclusively, that subterranean fires have displayed an energy in ancient periods, compared with which, their action at the present time gives but a pigmy representation. Consequently, therefore, their attendant phenomena,—earthquakes, meteoric displays, and terrestrial concussions,—must have inspired the ancient spectator with terrific sensations far superior to similar displays now witnessed. It is easy to conceive, that in the absence of a

science to investigate the causes of such phenomena, the minds of men must have been inspired with the extremes of awe, superstitious dread, and apprehension; and that they would naturally be constrained to impute to the most terrific invisible agencies, effects so manifest and so disproportionate to the action of the physical forces with which they were familiar.

No explanation would be so readily suggested, and so accordant with the excited imagination, as that which should refer such manifestation of force to powerful demons, who invisibly sported with the destinies of man, and held control of the elements around them.

Entertaining such belief, derived from such manifest display of super-human power, it would naturally follow, that minor phenomena, and even the mental and moral exhibitions, should be referred to the same, or to inferior agents, who invisibly influenced the organic structure, as well as the elements upon which it was dependent.

If, as has been premised, such crude deductions are referable to an elementary structure of the mind, it is to be presumed, that in the infancy of the human race, and in all subsequent societies deprived of the aids afforded by a scientific knowledge of terrestrial phe-

nomena, credulity, and the most absurd superstition should abound, to a degree, that the character of individuals and communities should receive an impress accordant with the fallacious systems which they originate.

With a mind, like that of man, too imbecile to define its true position in the universe, yet prone to speculate upon, and to generalize the most intricate phenomena presented to its observation, it is not surprising that the fictions of the imagination, in its untutored state, should be embraced as realities, and that the happiness of entire communities should be materially affected by the delusive systems which were embraced.

Yet notwithstanding the imperfections incident to the human mind, few would be the evils emanating therefrom, was reason allowed its legitimate sway in the analysis of the impressions derived from the objects of sense; or, at least, was it permitted to direct the application of the available sciences which have been cultivated in all civilized communities.

It has been presumed, that credulity and superstition are the elementary products of the human mind, influenced by exterior causes by which it is surrounded. But such would necessarily be the indefinite character of the original mental impulse, that little would result from its effects upon the simple and the

ignorant, but a vague impression of terror and apprehension, inspired by a sense of proximity with active and powerful agents, whose affections towards them, they were incapable of defining.

The general prevalence, popularity, and influence of magic, in the civilized states of antiquity, renders it extremely probable, that it was the most effectual instrument by which the people were governed, and by which, in a great degree, their national tranquility and power were sustained.

It is not to be presumed, that in this, the palmy period of magic, its import, like the modern acceptation of the term, was that of a low and vulgar art. Its history, as exhibited in Egypt, Persia, and Greece, and likewise in their predecessor and cotemporary nations, where it existed, would indicate that it was a name which embraced most of the natural and religious sciences of which they could boast; and that its professors, instead of being contemned like the modern juggler, were of no less distinguished consideration, than are men of eminent scientific attainments at the present period.

Hence in Egypt, will be found its king assembling his court magicians, to vie with Moses in the miracles which he wrought. The Persian magi were among the most im-

portant actors in matters relating to the state, as well as religion. In Greece, likewise, magic held eminent sway in their conduct of matters of civil government, as well as their religious ceremonies, under the direction of their priests, soothsayers, and oracular responses. Indeed, it is probable that the most of ancient science was concealed within the vail of magic; and that its sublime results were principally presented to the vulgar, as demonstrations of the will of their deities, whose terrible attributes and interested regards it was designed to represent to them.

From such view it will appear, that ancient magic and natural science were but synonymous appellations; and that the former presents a formidable aspect, only by the obscurity and mystery through which its facts were demonstrated to the multitude, ignorant of the artifices employed.

There can be but little doubt, that the character which the diverse systems of superstition have assumed among the various tribes of mankind, has been modeled by the devices of the crafty and intelligent, who from observation on the human character, as well as the causes of active external phenomena, were led to cherish and systematize a delusion, in which they beheld an instrumentality for effecting their selfish and ambitious aspirations.

Hence, by the exercise of magic, the rare and singular manifestations of the natural laws, and doubtless many scientific experiments of an impressive character, were exhibited to the ignorant multitude, as miracles and prodigies, significant that a divinity was the spectator and immediate rewarder of their actions.

From such sources, doubtless, emanated the systems of theology which have ever held in abject servitude the rude portions of man; all of which, on analysis, will be found to exhibit the devices of crafty inventors, adapted to the accomplishment of their designed usurpations. Such analysis will likewise show, that both nature and art have been assiduously investigated, with the object of deriving agencies to render their systems complicated and impenetrable, and to render mystical a texture, whose power alone was derived from its incomprehensibility.

Not content with the proofs which these devised systems of theology derived from the more manifest operations of the natural laws, such as earthquakes, meteors, volcanic eruptions, and thunder storms, their inventors have not failed to adduce the less imposing, and the apparently erratic manifestations of these laws, in corroboration of the impress effected by the former. Hence, the comet, experimental phi-

losophy, the vital laws, manifesting the inexplicable animal instincts, and the monstrosities occasional in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, have been exhibited to the astonished imaginations of those less familiar with the capabilities, and apparent abnormities of nature's operations, as divine interpositions, to impel skepticism to yield its assent to institutions which the gods regarded with special care, and to sustain which they manifested an unceasing and jealous interest.

Such is a portion of the evidence which was adduced to confirm the institutions and systems of ancient states, and such the expedients employed to bind the credulous to their observance. Many others might be enumerated, as combustible natural gases, issuing from mines, caverns, and springs, in all countries; the various nervous diseases, as epilepsy, hysteria, &c.; the effects of poisons, epidemics, and epizootics; spectral illusions; and, in short, all the unwonted phenomena whose causes were obscure and impenetrable.

But sufficient has been noticed to demonstrate that the inventors and expounders of the various ancient religious systems, were adepts in the science of human nature, and that in the structure of their fabrics such adaptation was regarded as should ensure to them its control.

Although knowledge and civilization have, in a degree, dissipated these erroneous systems, by the development of the causes of very many of the natural phenomena, by which they were sustained, yet with the light which these afford, we shall still witness the mind swayed by the dreamy figments of the imagination, and groping in mists, which a due exercise of reason would speedily dissipate.

It may appear surprising, that a being like man, so eminently endowed, beyond all other members of the animal kingdom, with intellectual faculties, should be so generally swayed by the illusions of sense and imagination; or that he should view the ordinary phenomena of nature, most of which are susceptible of an analysis by reason, with dread and apprehension. But, in explanation, it is to be considered that reason, as exhibited in the infancy of society, is adequate to explain but a portion of the effects of the natural laws; and that it is rarely exercised, except to provide for immediate wants. It need not therefore surprise us, who, with the superior light of science, are often baffled in our investigations, that mankind in their unenlightened condition should view phenomena of an unwonted character as the operation of invisible beings, who had the power to control their destinies for good or for evil. Nor need we be surprised, that their imaginations, excited

by various impenetrable mysteries presented for consideration, should depict the elements as peopled by a diversity of active intelligences, whose affections were represented as either friendly or adverse, as their influence conduced to promote or obstruct the objects of their pursuit

It is doubtless this incapacity of the intellect to explain the ordinary operations of natural causes, which has originated the infinity of superstitions that have held such despotic sway over ignorant minds, and permitted the imagination to beguile the senses to an adoption of the illusions which its ever prolific pencil furnishes for their consideration. When such crudities obtain possession of public sentiment, it is in no degree surprising, that individual happiness, or even that of communities, should become a sacrifice to their influence, by subjugating their minds to such capricious divinities as a prolific fancy might personify, when stimulated by instant hopes or fears.

It is a trait of the human mind, to contemplate with interest whatever is presented to it as deviating from ordinary natural events. Hence, whatever is novel or strange, or whatever affects the senses through an obscure medium, arouses the passions, and if incapable of being represented by distinct sensations, such

exaggerated coloring is presented by the imagination, that the mind becomes excited to a sense of wonder or marvelousness. Such is the mental condition induced by these indefinite sensations, that the judgments thereon are illusive and unsatisfactory, and the actions consequent thereto, are accordant with the erroneous impression. It is in this state, that the imagination, by awaking in the mind a sense of dread and apprehension, stimulates to decisions which calm and unbiased reason would not fail to reject as monstrous and absurd.

It is not designed here to exhibit the gross credulity and superstitions which actuate the savage tribes of the human family. The disgusting narrative would be nearly commensurate with the history of each; and it is presumed that the monstrous detail is familiar to all. It is rather the design of the present undertaking, to allude to the character and extent of credulity and superstition, in more civilized states; and to show, that by fostering the mental propensity alluded to, it is rendered more than probable, that the wise and the learned of antiquity, were enabled to impose upon their less enlightened countrymen, the fabulous theology, which became so extensively blended with the character, and held such extensive sway over nearly the entire sum of human action in that remote period.

By such view it will appear probable, that the sole object of its invention was that of subduing the passions of the ignorant, by means of a factitious supernatural machinery, that they might become the instruments by which to accomplish the objects, and thereby promote the interests, of their tyrants and oppressors.

It is designed, in connection with this allusion to presumed ancient frauds, to exhibit some of the prevailing modern phantasies, which if less efficient in subjecting the mind to a temporal despotism, evince that reason is still far from having obtained its legitimate dominion over the imagination and the passions.

In ancient Greece, the most enlightened, accomplished, and in some respects, the most superstitious nation of antiquity, as well as in Egypt, Persia and Rome, there is great reason for believing that science, instead of being applied by its possessors for the improvement of the mental condition of the masses of their population, was made the instrument of inculcating the most gross superstitions, with the view to enhance the interests of the deceivers. Legislators and philosophers appear to have applied the sciences but to subdue the mental faculties, and to stupify the reason of the multitude, that they might thereby be made more obedient slaves and subjects; whilst the priests, as pretended interpreters of the will of

the heavenly powers, were the professional instruments of their mental degradation.

That ancient science, like the modern, was in a degree applied to the improvement of the arts and economy of life, cannot be doubted. Nor does it admit of less doubt, that it was likewise employed to delude the minds of the people, and to subjugate them, by a pretended supernatural interposition, to the will and ambition of their tyrants. In pronouncing a judgment thus severe against ancient science generally, it must be admitted, that the sages and philosophers whom we have been taught to venerate for their sublime efforts in the cause of wisdom and virtue, are made obnoxious to the charge of a connivance, if not of participation, in the stupendous frauds devised for the degradation of the human mind. This implication of the honesty of ancient philosophy, will doubtless be viewed by its admirers as little less than a wanton attack upon the character of those writers, whose intellectual efforts, it must be admitted, have essentially aided in the development of the dignity of human nature, and whose intellects have stood as prominent lights in the darkness of the past; guiding successive generations along the path of progressive civilization and refinement. With a view therefore to qualify, and indeed extenu-

ate the odium of the implied charge here made against the ancient sages, it may be stated in their justification, that their moral codes were in a great degree based upon national expediency; and that they lived at a period when the art of governing the passions of the multitude, by enlightening their reason, was unknown. It will therefore appear manifest, that the moral codes to which modern society is amenable, cannot with propriety be applied as a standard by which to impeach the honesty, or arraign the motives, of heathen philosophers.

But it may be repeated, that whatever might have been the real belief of the sages and legislators of Greece and Rome, relative to their pretended invisible agencies, it is certain that they were, in a great degree, instrumental in multiplying and personating the superstitions constituting their theology. If (as it is probable) all the learned of antiquity contemplated their deities, for whom they inculcated reverence, but as absurd and ridiculous fictions of the imagination, they doubtless esteemed such pious fraud not reprehensible, nor inconsistent with their moral and religious duties, as conservators of the community, which might be interposed as an alternative for restraining the turbulence of the multitude, by an influence over their minds through this medium.

If the ignorant populace of the ancient states were thus deluded to a surrender of their inherent right to liberty, it was doubtless effected by the concurrent agency of their wise and learned cotemporaries; comprising as well their legislators and philosophers, as their priests and magicians. While it was the office of their priests to inculcate and confirm a belief in their pretended spiritual agencies, to conduct the mysteries,* and sacred rites, practiced in their temples, and to delineate the character of beings who held the control of their destinies, either by rewarding or afflicting, with a despotism as capricious and instable as that of their tyrants,—the magicians, as demonstrators of their secret will, affected to display the awful power of the gods, to incite the popular energy in important emergencies, whether national or domestic.

---

* The Eleusinian Mysteries appear to have been practised as religious ceremonies, by a society which was most extensive in the times of antiquity, and existed for a very long period. Their secrets, or ceremonies, like those of modern Free Masonry, were guarded by the most formidable oaths. Death, in its most terrific form, with the eternal vengeance of the gods, was the punishment of those who intimated their nature to the profane. It has been supposed that the secrets of this society consisted in the arts and scientific experiments which were employed in the temples, to demonstrate to the uninitiated the acts and will of their deities.

It is obvious, that in the ancient nations generally, a knowledge of the most ordinary phenomena of nature was concealed from the people, to operate upon their fears; and that they were exhibited to them as manifestations of the angry or complacent expression of the affections of their deities, in circumstances in which national objects required an energetic demonstration of their physical energies. To show that such was the effect produced by these phenomena, we need but instance the terrors and depressions that often paralyzed armies during impending battles, by such events as eclipses of the sun or moon, by earthquakes or thunder, the causes of which were familiar to the learned. The occurrence of meteoric or other extraordinary lights in the atmosphere; the flight of birds of reputed good or bad omen, ever depressed or aroused the ardor of conflicting armies, in accordance with the construction given to such events, by their augurs or soothsayers, who affected to interpret to them the will of their leaders or tyrants, under the guise of a heavenly admonition. The particular appearances of the entrails of beasts, which are known to vary according to the state of their health; the birth of monsters, which every physiologist of ordinary intelligence, knows to be occasioned by an arrest, or exuberance of development, consist-

ent with the occasional operation of the vital laws;—these their soothsayers affected to behold as legible indications, portentous of the fate of armies or kingdoms. Such, now deemed ordinary events, were exhibited to the vulgar of ancient enlightened states, as miraculous interpositions of their fabulous gods, relative to impending events, such as were contemplated with engrossing interest by the public.*

These, as ordinary natural phenomena, by a concealment of their causes from the ignorant, were wielded by the learned, to excite and

---

* The superstition of the soldiers of ancient armies was often available and convenient, to check their imprudent ardor for hostile attacks, as well as to stimulate their courage when in a state of depression. To insure such control over their minds, augurs and soothsayers were necessary appendages to their expeditions, who often exercised greater influence, by means of their augueries, than their commanders.

Occasionally, however, serious detriment occurred to expeditions, in consequence of the credulity of the soldiers. No exhortations of their commanders, or attempts to explain to the soldiers the true character of such natural phenomena as eclipses, thunder, &c. could induce them to engage, previous to a propitiatory sacrifice to the deity, whose wrath was supposed to be thus manifested. Nicias, and many other ancient commanders, were compelled to forego favorable opportunities for attacking the enemy, in consequence of eclipses, or thunder storms, occurring immediately preceding a contemplated attack.

control their passions. But in their absence, at periods requiring such agency, it is highly probable, that science was often resorted to for their artificial production.

Researches into the state of ancient sciences, render it probable that physics, with some of the ancients, had attained a degree of perfection little short of that of the present period; and it is not unlikely, that in what are termed the experimental sciences, the former were superior, in many respects, to the latter. It will, therefore, be readily inferred from modern experience, that artificial earthquakes, thunder, meteors, and other fiery and mysterious representations, might be easily presented to the astonishment of a multitude, ignorant of the artifice, equal to that produced by the natural elements. The artifices and mysteries which composed the rites practiced in the ancient temples, have perished with their actors and the architectural structures in which they were exhibited. But sufficient historic details of their effects upon their credulous devotees remain, to convince even the tyro in modern science, that the magic of which these rites doubtless consisted, was in no degree superior to that practiced by the modern juggler, with his machinery of optical lenses, mirrors, magic lantern, and camera obscura, aided in their effects by ventriloquism. With

these instruments, and an architectural structure as suitable as doubtless was that of the ancient temples, scenes might unquestionably be displayed to a modern audience, no less imposing, (though with emotions of pleasure, rather than veneration and terror,) than such as impressed the ancient devotee.

The various prodigies related in ancient history, which were interpreted in a manner to astonish the credulous, and to arouse their passions, by exhibiting them as the manifestation of the affections of some interested deity, and which were explained as foreshadowing success or disaster to states, all admit of ready solution, from causes of an ordinary character; such as the apparent speaking of beasts, statues, &c., by the aid of ventriloquism; the sweating of statues, by condensation of atmospheric vapor, caused by inequalities of temperature, or by hydrostatic pressure; fountains, or streams, representing blood or oil,* by chemical solu-

*The bloody appearance of brooks, fountains, considerable portions of lakes, and the ocean, together with occasional red snow, was frequently brought to the attention of the ancients, and was exhibited to the credulous as portentous of misfortunes to states. The investigation of the phenomenon by modern naturalists, has proved that such appearance is caused by the extensive propagation of an animalcular insect in such waters, sufficient to effect the discoloration. Many substances might be employed to simulate such reputed miraculous interposi-

tion, and a variety of other artificial means; or by the periodical generation of a species of aqueous animalculæ, or vegetable algæ, such as have often been witnessed by naturalists, as giving bloody discoloration to streams, and extensive portions of the ocean. The slightest resemblance to a pretended reality, would be generally adequate to convince the credulous observer, whose passions and imagination were excited to an eagerness to witness the novel and marvelous. A writer of note remarks, "every thing is a prodigy in the eyes of the ignorant man, who sees the universe only in the narrow circle of his existence. The philosopher beholds no prodigies; he knows that a monstrous birth, or the sudden crumbling of the hardest rock, results from causes as natural as the alternate return of night and day." This remark may not in all cases hold true, as science is as yet inadequate to fathom all the mysteries presented by the operation of the natural laws. There are, however, few of the extraordinary manifestations of these laws, but which will admit of a satisfactory solution, by the observer who calmly investigates causes; and where these

---

tion before the ignorant, in case of a necessary emergency. In the case of blood colored snow, the insect was probably conveyed into the atmosphere, by the vapor from which it was formed.

are less manifest, who resorts to aids afforded by such analogies as ordinary experience will, in most cases, supply. To such it will appear manifest, that the exhibitions of magic in the temples of Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome, as well as the various prodigies related in ancient history, which impressed the superstitious devotee, with the awful sense of a personal interview with their presiding deities,—and, in short, most of the unwonted phenomena, employed as demonstrations of the will of their deities, are susceptible of being represented in a modern chemical or philosophical laboratory, or may readily be explained by an observation of ordinary natural causes.

When it is considered that the most degrading ignorance of the sciences pervaded the mass of the people of ancient nations, and that an undying propensity for the marvelous and mysterious, ever characterizes this condition; when we reflect that the temples in which their religious rites were enacted, probably possessed a structure and scenery well suited to represent the imposing mysteries of which they were the theatres; that these were conducted by a hereditary priesthood, skilled in the manipulations of their art, who wielded agencies concealed within the awful veil which shrouded their operations; and

when it is taken into consideration, with what excited imaginations and passions the pious worshiper there approached the capricious divinity, it is not surprising that the minds of the multitudes of ancient nations, should have been moulded and governed by the machinery of a factitious theology; or that they were the credulous and superstitious people that history represents to us.

If, as is most probable, a theology thus artfully devised, was made effective in subduing the multitude, it is likewise reasonable to presume, that even the philosophers and sages, with no light, but that of natural reason, to direct them through the complex labyrinths of nature, (so evincive of a designing architect,) in their dubious and unsatisfactory condition, must have viewed their relations to such manifest invisible power, with a superstitious awe and apprehension, bordering upon that with which they inspired their less gifted fellow countrymen, when contemplating the factitious divinities devised for their subjugation.

Such are the conclusions to which we are impelled, relative to the instrumentality, and consequent blighting influence, which polytheism exerted to effect the degradation of the human mind, and which plunged it into

that multiplicity of vice and depravity, so abounding in nations subject to its control.

We have now to contemplate a condition of society, in which Christianity has, in a degree, dissipated the absurd fables of polytheism, and taught man his true relations to his Maker;—in which a more generally diffused education has enabled him to assert the native dignity and equality of human character, and assisted in wresting from his mind the manacles of a theology devised with the view of subjugating his intellect and his will.

Yet notwithstanding the interposition of such a fortunate revolution, in behalf of the supremacy of reason, we shall still find the mind often yielding to the influence of the imagination and the passions, and fostering credulity and superstition, little less gross than that which swayed the devotees of pagan theology.

In the state of transition from polytheism to Christianity, it could hardly be presumed that the recent converts to the latter, could easily depose their faith in the ghostly influence derived from an education in the tenets of the former; and which, consequently, had become intimately blended and associated with their habits of thought and mental conception.

Accordingly it will be found, that during the strife which occurred between the genius

of polytheism, and Christianity, their respective fanatical advocates often vied with each other, in asserting their adverse claims to precedence, by their appeal to progidies and miracles, to the no small detriment of the latter. More especially, since Christianity, instead of attempting to subdue the obdurate passions by an appeal to a sense of the novel and the marvelous, proffers rather the superior claim of its ability to enlighten the reason and understanding; and, while it exhibits to man his duties to society, it at the same time demonstrates his religious obligations, and the character of his Creator.

On the final overthrow of paganism by Christianity, it would have been fortunate for the latter, had the magic and prodigies, with the various deceptions devised for sustaining the former, perished in its ruins. So far, however, was this from being the fact, that we shall find pretenders to Christianity, in some of the rival sects, exerting the engines of fraud and imposition, with an energy worthy of their pagan competitors; and this, it must be presumed, was enacted more for the purpose of promoting personal reputation, and the attainment of objects of temporal ambition, than with the view of advancing the spiritual interests of their confiding adherents.

If pagan impostors extorted a votive fee, and at the same time disciplined the worshippers of the factitious god for the yoke of their tyrants, by magic, by prodigies, and other apparent supernatural machinery, the spurious saints or prophets of Christianity effected objects no less culpable, by astonishing their ignorant adherents, by apparent miracles, wrought, no doubt, mostly by scientific experiments and mysticisms, through which the imagination was beguiled, and the real object of faith was rendered obscure.

Through the knowledge of natural coincidences, furnished by science, or by secret agents, a prophetic character was not unfrequenly conferred upon such pretenders, and in many cases, the various wonders of the natural world were, no doubt, sought and made available to astonish the ignorant; and were adduced as evidence, that their demonstrator was a special recognized agent and favorite of heaven. There is little doubt, but that many of the less familiar phenomena of nature have furnished the means by which apparent miracles have been wrought by the designing, before those ignorant of their causes and character. Thus the mirage, a phenomena peculiar to particular locations, is produced by refraction of the sun's rays, by atmospheric vapor of unequal density, by

which objects, as ships, villages, persons, &c. ordinarily invisible, are brought into view, apparently suspended in the air, either inverted, or erect, and of exaggerated size. These being simply natural optical illusions, might easily be exhibited by the designing impostor as ærial spectres. Other instances of the singular effects of refraction, or reflection, might be referred to; as the celebrated spectre of Brocken, of the Hartz mountain, in Hanover: the Fata Morgiana, of the straits of Massena, where men, animals, and even landscapes, as by a mirror, are represented as in nature, elevated in the atmosphere.* Such, by the pretended and designing heavenly favorite, might easily be made to appear to credulity, as spirits

*These are doubtless natural phenomena, produced by reflection or refraction, when the rays of light, proceeding from the object to the eye, pass through a medium of unequal density. It may happen, that an inequality of temperature is formed between the land, or water, and the atmosphere in the vicinity of the objects thus represented. In such condition, a passage of heat, or caloric, is constantly occurring from the hotter to the colder medium. It will be perceived, therefore, that when the earth, or water, is more heated than the superincumbent air, the adjacent stratum of the latter will become heated from the former, and consequently more rarified than the strata above, causing the inequality required for the refraction necessary to effect the above phenomena. The rays of light, in passing from the object to the eye, thence become refracted, or curved from their ordinary straight lines,

obedient to his invocation. These, with numerous other natural phenomena of varied character, will not fail to be suggested to those but moderately versed in natural philosophy, as adequate to explain a large portion of the

---

causing the objects to appear elevated above their true position

Objects thus represented, will appear erect, if within the focal distance of the natural lenses formed by this inequality of density of the different strata of air; or they will appear inverted, when the eye is sufficiently beyond such focal distances to permit the rays to enter it after their focal crossings. If to such inequality of density, is added an extremely attenuated aqueous vapor, a reflection of a portion of the rays will occur, and a spectral image of the beholder will be formed, as by a common mirror, which will appear of a size holding a relation to the convexity or concavity of the natural mirror thus formed. The mirage is an instance of refraction, and the spectre of Brocken of reflection. Similar phenomena are stated by Humbolt to be of frequent occurrence in South America, and they have been often noted by others.

Recently a description of an optical illusion was given by a traveler across a desert, situated between New Mexico and California. The writer, a member of a company *en route* for California, relates, that they were one day startled by the appearance of a company, consisting of men and animals, apparently at a distance, which at first caused no inconsiderable alarm, from the supposition of its being a band of hostile savages. It subsequently proved to be but a mirror representation of their own band, produced doubtless by the atmospheric phenomena alluded to.

(For a more particular description of the above phenomena, see Brewster's Natural Magic.)

so called miracles, announced by monks and pretended saints, for the admiration of the credulous and superstitious.

It has been noticed as most probable, that the pagan devotees, by means of mirrors and lenses, so arranged in the ancient temples as to effect the requisite optical illusions, aided by ventriloquism, were made to hold an imaginary personal interview with their presiding deities. It is equally probable, that a large portion of the miracles imposed upon credulous Christians in the dark periods of the church, was effected by frauds of a similar description.

It is known to those familiar with optics, that by the aid of a concave mirror, with suitably arranged lenses, and a magic lantern, objects ordinarily invisible to an audience, may be apparently introduced before it, either exaggerated or distorted, to any degree of frightfulness. The dead may be apparently evoked from their graves, and by the aid of ventriloquism, made to hold conversation with their living friends. Apparent demons, or angels, may be presented in attitudes and costume, suited to accomplish the objects of their introduction; and various other exhibitions of like character may be represented, which might be palmed upon the ignorant and credulous, as supernatural manifestations. Artifi-

ces of this description would doubtless be made available, by unprincipled pretenders to inspiration, who had become inspired by the ambition of acquiring the character of heavenly vicegerents.

By one possessing an acquaintance with the various drugs and medicines, somnolency, ecstacy, and delirium may be easily effected. With the power occasionally acquired over animals of the most ferocious character, and over reptiles, by which their natures appear changed to mildness, as exhibited by the ancient Psilli, or serpent tamers, the modern Van Amburgh, and others, a supposed miraculous control of the instinctive attributes was represented. With a knowledge and exercise of the physiological sympathies, by which various diseases, and even death, are often simulated in persons of excitable and susceptible nervous temperament;—and with the ability of controling the wonderful illusions capable of being effected by optics, by chemistry, and galvanism, by means of which the most surprising metamorphoses are induced, and even death apparently is made to give place to vitality, a power apparently superhuman was wielded. When it is considered, that such exhibitions were made before credulous spectators, whose senses and reason were enchained by an excited imagination, and an

irresistible propensity to believe in the marvelous, aided by the influence capable of being derived from art and science, together with that afforded by manual dexterity, it is not difficult to conceive, that the magic and prodigies of the ancients, and the miracles exhibited subsequent to the first century of Christianity, by its pretended friends, might have been represented, exclusive of the aid of supernatural intervention.

When it is further taken into consideration, that many of the affected miraculous events which have astonished the credulous, are but legends, or narratives, related by monks and recluses, we need hardly hesitate to conclude, that the entire machinery of so called modern miracles, are but knavish devices to sustain, by such appeal to credulity, religious tenets wanting the support of the genuine precepts of the Divine Author of Christianity.

ces of this description would doubtless be made available, by unprincipled pretenders to inspiration, who had become inspired by the ambition of acquiring the character of heavenly vicegerents.

By one possessing an acquaintance with the various drugs and medicines, somnolency, ecstacy, and delirium may be easily effected. With the power occasionally acquired over animals of the most ferocious character, and over reptiles, by which their natures appear changed to mildness, as exhibited by the ancient Psilli, or serpent tamers, the modern Van Amburgh, and others, a supposed miraculous control of the instinctive attributes was represented. With a knowledge and exercise of the physiological sympathies, by which various diseases, and even death, are often simulated in persons of excitable and susceptible nervous temperament;—and with the ability of controling the wonderful illusions capable of being effected by optics, by chemistry, and galvanism, by means of which the most surprising metamorphoses are induced, and even death apparently is made to give place to vitality, a power apparently superhuman was wielded. When it is considered, that such exhibitions were made before credulous spectators, whose senses and reason were enchained by an excited imagination, and an

irresistible propensity to believe in the marvelous, aided by the influence capable of being derived from art and science, together with that afforded by manual dexterity, it is not difficult to conceive, that the magic and prodigies of the ancients, and the miracles exhibited subsequent to the first century of Christianity, by its pretended friends, might have been represented, exclusive of the aid of supernatural intervention.

When it is further taken into consideration, that many of the affected miraculous events which have astonished the credulous, are but legends, or narratives, related by monks and recluses, we need hardly hesitate to conclude, that the entire machinery of so called modern miracles, are but knavish devices to sustain, by such appeal to credulity, religious tenets wanting the support of the genuine precepts of the Divine Author of Christianity.

SECTION II.

Witchcraft.

The absurd and maniacal belief in witchcraft, so fraught with evils to society in the last and the preceding century, and from which no nation can boast total exemption, appears in the present age nearly extinguished. This is unquestionably one of the baleful progeny which is indebted for its origin to magic and the occult sciences; and all the phenomena which gave rise to the belief in its reality, admit of the same or similar explanation as heretofore given of that fruitful source of mental delusion.

This branch of the occult sciences was perhaps invented and cultivated, to give variety to the delusions which the professional impostor exhibited as novelties, in barter for the more substantial offerings of ignorance and credulity. If, however, we are to estimate its character from the puerilities and follies which history, in general, details of its operations, we can but infer, that it was a degenerate offspring of its parent, in which the "magician had lost his cunning;" or that he had adapted his art in accordance with the

infantile taste of the ages in which it flourished. It will be perceived, that instead of the adroit deceptions practiced upon the senses by ancient magic, the chief aspirations of its modern progeny, it would appear, were generally limited to such petty recreations as perambulating the air on broomsticks; its traditional nocturnal bachanals at the Sabbat,*

* The Sabbat was a supposed assembly of witches, met in mystic conclave, which was presided over by the devil. An introduction to its orgies was supposed to be effected by rubbing the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, and sometimes the entire body, with an enchanted pomade. The effect of this was, the supply of wings, with which the initiated flew to the Sabbat. The employment there, was dancing with broomsticks, and the practice of many ridiculous bachanals until the morning, when the assembly was dissolved.

It has been supposed that ointments were formed from such poisonous plants as henbane, stramoninm, cicuta, &c., which professional impostors often applied to their ignorant dupes, with the effect of producing such delirious dreams as had been previously impressed upon their imagination, which became waking hallucinations of a real belief, by the deluded wretches, of their presence at these assemblies. It is more probable, however, that the traditionary tales of these meetings, which were doubtless rife during the excitements of an epidemic witchcraft, impressed the imaginations of weak minds to the degree represented as produced by the enchanted pomade. It is therefore not unlikely, that many ignorant, but innocent victims, thus monomaniacally affected, may have been induced to a confession of participation in sorcery, and by such act have sacrificed their lives as the penalty of their imprudence.

or elsewhere; or its even more ridiculous interference with kitchen housewifery, by its antics with the butter churn, or with the pigs or poultry; and its equally perplexing annoyances practised upon the goat-herd or husbandman.

Again, while original magic arts exhibited a skill and power calculated to excite admiration of the resources of the human intellect, witchcraft, on the contrary, produced the effect rather to demean its power, by its habitual resorts to the most petty and contemptible expedients to accomplish the objects of its low ambition. While the former has been the professional employment of the wise and the learned, the latter is more often that of the old, the ugly, the vicious and despised, whose odious forms and character, public disgust—biased by general ignorance, and favoring epidemic influences,—has, without doubt, been prone to exaggerate into a relationship and association with demoniacal agencies.*

---

* An old writer of note, who lived in the time when witchcraft extensively prevailed, thus describes the characters of reputed witches. They were "women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowll, and full of wrinkles, poore, sullen, superstitious and papists; or such as know no religion; in whose drousie minds the the devell hath gotten a fine sear; so as, what

In Christian communities, a belief in witchcraft, as a supernatural art, has doubtless obtained no small support from the notice which it receives from Scripture, in the case of king Saul, and the denunciation of the art therein contained. But it is believed, that such notice rather has reference to the sin of this specific imposition, than to an art recognized as a direct compact with the infernal powers. There is great reason for believing, that the dramatic exhibition enacted by the Witch of Endor, by which Saul was made to believe in the re-appearance of the deceased prophet Samuel, to announce his approaching fate at Gilboa, was but an imposition practiced upon the senses of that monarch. In whatever character it may be estimated, it certainly evinced far less of dramatic skill in its execution, than the scenes mentioned as exhibited

---

mischaſe, mischance, calamitie or slaughter, is brought to passe, they are easilie perswaded the same is doone by themselves, imprinting in their minds an earnest and constant imagination thereof. They are lean and deformed, shewing melancholie in their faces, to the horrer of all that see them. They are doting scholds, mad, develish, and not much differing from them that are thought to be possessed with spirits; so firm and steadfast in their opinions, as whosoever shall onlie have respect to the constancie of their words uttered, would easilie believe they were true indeed."—*Reginald Scott's "Discoverie of Witchcraft."*

to the devotee of the Grecian temples, as in these the solicited personage was often introduced to the astonished senses of the petitioners; while in the case of the Jewish king, it is not stated that either he or his companions actually beheld the vision announced, but rather that his knowledge of the presence of the ghost was based on the authority of the actress alone.

It is most probable, therefore, that this transaction was but a scenic representation devised for the occasion, and pre-announced by emissaries of the sorceress, in time for a preparation of the scenery. In the exhibition presented to Saul, unlike those of the temples, where a spectral apparition was introduced, the probable ventriloquism constituted the main demonstrable evidence of the supernatural presence. The terror manifested by the actress was most likely but a well represented affectation of the passion, which the habits of her avocation enabled her to render imposing. The prediction which followed was such, that in the known straitened condition of the Jewish army on the eve of the battle of Gilboa, it required no witch or prophet to pre-announce a result which was most probably foreshadowed to the entire nation. Indeed, when it is considered, that to the naturally hypochondrical mind of the monarch, was added a

consciousness of imminent peril, similar to that impending over Brutus and Julian, on the night preceding their disasters, it is in no degree surprising that the Jewish king should disregard whatever defects might, to a more indifferent spectator, be apparent in the scene; nor that he should have been the dupe of a deception practiced before him.

It has been noticed, that in scenic arrangement, this exhibition of Jewish sorcery was manifestly inferior to those of its cotemporary relative, the magic of the Egyptian or Grecian temples, in which was presented, by means of mirrors, lenses, &c. a spectral apparition of the object sought. Yet it must be admitted, that this far surpassed, in adroitness and dignity, most of the exhibitions of modern witchcraft which its history has furnished. Most of the manifestations of modern sorcery, by which communities have not unfrequently been agitated, and the worst of public calamities induced, have been noticed as of a most puerile character, unworthy the name of an art, and alike demeaning to the taste and capacities of its professors, and of the intelligent evil agent by whom they were supposed to be suggested. If exceptions to such puerile character of witchcraft are occasionally found, they are to be explained from the intellectual superiority of those who directed their operations.

A careful analysis of its phenomena will prove it in the main, to consist in a display of the petty malice of insignificant and unprincipled individuals, toward rivals or enemies; or to have originated from an ambition, through eccentricity of character, of acquiring notoriety in a neighborhood, for the purposes of interest or fame; or, what is far more frequent, they are derived from such natural phenomena, or artful devices, which, from ignorance of their real causes, have been imputed to demoniac influence, wielded by some weak or contemned individuals, upon whom public odium or dread had concentrated.

That witchcraft of this character should, in modern society, have become epidemical throughout whole kingdoms, as history furnishes abundant proofs, is certainly one of the most inexplicable enigmas presented in the operations of the human mind. It admits of explanation, only from that wonderful endowment of the animal economy, termed sympathy, which has been found, in a variety of circumstances, to possess an involuntary control of its action, as well in health as in disease.

What is most surprising in this case, is the fact, that the moral pestilence, when of an epidemic character, has proved its efficiency, not only in the perversion of the intellects of

the ignorant, but also of many of the learned and wise, who lived in times when the sympathetic contagion became diffused throughout society. It is unquestionably, in no small degree, attributable to the fact that sorcery, as a supernatural art, has been sustained by a Bacon, a Mather, and others of distinguished reputation, that the discussion regarding its reality has been prolonged. But since most national delusions, such as that of astrology, the philosopher's stone, with such maniacal speculations as those of the South Sea, Mississippi, and numerous others of like character, have involved minds of similar intellectual calibre in their results, these instances may rather be received as evidence, that human reason, even in its greatest development, is not devoid of imbecility,—especially when assailed by the contagious influence of sympathetic national hallucinations.

Probably no delusion or imposition which has ever acquired an ascendancy over the human mind, has proved so detrimental to the interests and true happiness of society, as has the popular belief in sorcery, or witchcraft. If magic has been instrumental in subjugating the mind in bondage to a factitious theology, thereby enchaining its native powers to an abject despotism,—or has occasionally resorted to assassination, clandestine murder by potent

poisons, and to formidable experiments, as the reserved agents for the protection of its secrets, (in many instances no doubt designed to verify its predictions, and thus to perpetuate its influence,)—it has the merit of originating and cultivating many of the important sciences, such as natural philosophy, chemistry, medicine, &c. with the view to aid its operations.

Astrology and alchemy, though they excited false hopes in mankind concerning nativity, health and longevity, and preyed upon the interests of their deluded devotees, can assert claims of having improved astronomy, mathematics, meteorology, botany, and in some degree the other sciences, by the necessary studies of their proficients. But the more modern art of sorcery, while it can assert no claim to results which have produced, directly or indirectly, such benefit to society, has ever, in times of its prevalence, detrimentally affected the social compact, by introducing general distrust among its constituents, dissevered the natural ties of kindred and friends, poisoned the fountains of happiness by unchaining the dissocial passions, and engendered the most gloomy forebodings of evil, and the darkest superstition. Indeed, it may be asserted, that by judicial and other murders of its innocent but mostly ignorant victims, it has in its destructive career been a formidable rival to war, pestilence, and famine.

It is difficult for the existing generation to compute the immense sum of evil which their predecessors have experienced from the absurd belief in sorcery. Sufficient, however, may be comprehended to demonstrate the imbecility of human reason, when neglecting the efforts necessary to enable it to acquire a due estimate of its powers. It is, without doubt, to the light derived from a generally diffused science, that the bane, at this era of the world, has nearly lost its virus within the borders of civilization; and as history is but philosophy teaching by example, a discussion of its evils, so abounding in the past, is mostly useful as affording a beacon by which to avoid those so fatal to the happiness of past generations; while at the same time an illustration is furnished, that errors most portentous for the stability of society, are susceptible of extermination by a suitable mental culture.

SECTION III.

Dreams.

Of a similar character, and resulting from the same propensity of the mind for the marvelous, which has been alluded to in the preceding sections, is the belief which has assigned to dreams a rank with the supernatural. All mental impressions deviating from the ordinary operations of the mind; all the representations of sense to it, of a character to which it has not been accustomed, have ever been claimed by the credulous as derived from agencies exterior and foreign to those ordinarily originating mental conceptions; or, in short, have been by them ascribed to a supernatural influence controling its action.

Although to the philosophical observer it may be superfluous to state, that such belief originates from an inattention to a due analysis of the impressions derived from the senses, or from a too hasty reception of traditionary legends derived from rude and ignorant ages, yet it may be useful briefly to notice the physiological condition upon which such representations and erroneous notions are dependent.

All dreams originate from former sensations, which have been introduced by the senses, and stored in the mind, susceptible of being recalled by memory and submitted to the scrutiny of the reasoning faculty, by which their relations are determined, through the agency of association. Such being the action of the internal faculties relative to the materials furnished by the several senses, it occurs in a state of imperfect sleep, i. e. when a part of the mental faculties are torporized, and others, with memory, are in a state of activity, that the sensations in store are recalled by memory, and associations instituted similar to those of a state of wakefulness. But the process wanting the correction of judgment and the active senses, imagination often effects combinations so fantastic as to represent objects, or scenes, wholly deviating from those occurring in nature. Thus it may occur in sleep, that the active faculties, by combining parts of the sensation derived from an eagle, with that of the horse, that a being like the fabulous griffin should be presented to the mind as a reality; or wings may be supplied in the same manner to a reptile, representing a flying dragon, which will be presented to the mind as a real existence, until the aroused senses shall furnish a correction. Such it will be perceived are but ordinary sensations, com-

bined by the imagination in a manner which possess no types in nature. But it may happen in the various modes of combination in sleep, that objects, or events, are portrayed in accordance with nature, but in forms exaggerated, diminished, or distorted, in comparison with their types with which we have been familiar, and therefore have become the typical standard of judgment on all after sensations. In such case, the credulous not unfrequently become excited to a state of apprehension, or fear, from the conviction that such are of extra natural character, and of course a foreshadowing of evil or good awaiting them in the future.

The relations of the mind with its adjunct material organization, are manifestly most intimate and dependent. But what may be the essential nature of their union, or the mode by which the affections of each are mutually interchanged, or communicated, will probably elude the efforts of research during their material connection. Such manifestly, however, is the character of their association, that the affections or impressions originating in the one are by mutual sympathy communicated to its associate; and a series of actions, either mental or corporeal, are consequent and in accordance therewith. However intricate may be the connection between mind and matter,

it is manifest that it is to the mutual sympathies originating therefrom, together with the relations existing between the several mental faculties, that we are to derive an explanation of the phenomena exhibited by the mind in dreams. In conformity with these relations, and in accordance with the impressions affecting either the organs or the mind, through the agency of its sensations in store, will be formed the great variety of dreams which are brought to our consideration. Thus those of the conscience stricken culprit, who has succeeded in eluding justice, will be influenced by his predominant idea, and prisons and gibbets will be depicted in his dreams. Or when barred within the cell of the condemned, his ardent desires of life may occasionally preponderate in his dreams, and depict to him ideal scenes of freedom, and escape from his merited deserts. The miser will dream of wealth, or the poverty which harasses his imagination during his wakeful hours; and the enthusiast, of heavenly bliss or of devils, and the torments which await the spiritual transgressor. In all these cases, organic actions will generally result, which are in accordance with the exciting mental process.

Such is the stimulus which gives coloring to the dreamy phantoms, when the influence of the correcting senses and the judgment is

withdrawn by the torpor of sleep, and the trains of thought instituted by the wakeful faculties are directed by the inventive imagination only.

On the contrary, all bodily derangements which interrupt healthy sleep, by becoming sympathetic stimuli to the mind, often depict in exaggeration, conditions of affliction, sickness, suffering and death; which train of mental disasters, probably, in most cases are suggested by a slight irritation of the digestive organs, arising from imperfectly digested food, or other structural irritations of an unpleasant character, which a waking attention to external objects would render ineffective on the mind.

Of a similar character, though produced by more permanent and efficient causes, is the delerium from grave disease, in which the embarrassed organs supply such unnatural stimulus to the brain, that the equilibrium of the faculties becomes disturbed to such a degree, that the ideas in store in the mind predominate over those immediately affecting the external senses; and are combined in a manner productive of the exaltation, incoherence, and mental imagery, characterizing that affection. It may be remarked, that in a condition of healthy correspondence of the bodily and mental functions, either the entire faculties of the

mind subside into a state of inactivity and entire quiesence; or when in a state of partial activity, they are employed in such combination of retained sensations, as will effect dreams of a character corresponding in agreeableness with that experienced from the original external sensations constituting their types; and such as a normal state of the systematic functions ever effects, whether in the sleeping or waking condition. It would indeed be extraordinary, considering the uniformity of occurring events with those past, should none occur in the future bearing a similitude to those which have been previously presented to the mind in a state of sleep. It is doubtless this natural similitude, or perhaps the exciting and strange combination of ideas constituting the dream, from the causes alluded to, which has originated the notion, that the mental vagaries during sleep, are occasional revelations, or foreshadowings of future events. But notwithstanding this ready faith of the credulous in the supposed revelation, it is conceived that they rarely derive indications from the premonition, sufficiently explicit to direct their action in suitable adaptation to meet the event presumed to be predicted. Indeed it is difficult for reason to detect an economy in such dubious foreshadowings, even in the view of their being of

supernatural origin. And it is certain that little results therefrom, except the vague hopes or fears which they excite, and the consequent effects of these upon the dreamer, or the object of his dream.

It is probable that the events realized subsequent to their prototypes having been shadowed in dreams, are generally such as have been ardently expected, or painfully dreaded; such as had been the subject of a thoughtful impression anterior to the dream; and that in most instances, such dream is but a repetition of sensations which have previously been introduced to the mind in its ardent contemplation of such expected future contingency.

There is little doubt that the credulous faith, conferring upon extraordinary dreams a premonitory character, has in many instances prompted the dreamer to the efforts which were requisite for the attainment of the good foreshadowed; or that the dread of a disastrous event, as where death at a particular period was predicted in a dream, with attendant circumstances of an impressive character, has produced such depressing effect upon an excitable nervous system, on the approach of the dreaded period, as to extinguish the vital principle. The hope or fear of an event, in such case, becomes the agent of its accomplishment. That occasional correspondences

should occur between dreams and succeeding events, is in no degree surprising. But that the natural activity of the mind during sleep should possess a necessary connection with either the good or evil events succeeding, obtains no support from reason or a philosophical view of facts.

SECTION IV.

Ghosts.

The conceived existence of ghosts, as supernatural personal representations, has been the subject of discussion by philosophers, and has inspired the timid and credulous with dread and apprehension in all ages.

It is not surprising that such notions should exist in periods in which the vital laws had received but little cultivation; nor that they should have obtained credence with the devotees of religious beliefs, like those of the ancients, which represented the elements as peopled by innumerable invisible agents, who were active intermeddlers in human affairs; nor even that they should have found a place in the systems of ancient philosophy, which inculcated the most vague and indefinite notions in relation to the soul and its destiny. But it might rationally be anticipated, that the modern refinements of natural and revealed science, by which the laws of nature and the attributes of Deity have been demonstrated, would long since have dissipated a belief, which neither receives support from the one, nor conveys an elevated con-

ception of the economy of the other. For, in most instances, such supposed spiritual intercourse has occurred with the weak and the ignorant, and so illegible has been the revelation, that little has resulted to the recipient, beyond the terror and vague apprehensions which were aroused. It is therefore difficult for the mind to detect a wise economy in such reputed premonitory acts, through which it is rarely pretended that indications are given, by which the will or object of the agent is revealed.

It may be confidently asserted, that most of the instances adduced as proofs of the existence of ghosts as actual personalities, admit of explanation, either as being deceptions practiced upon the timid by the designing, through the aid of suitable costume, or optical instruments, such as has been referred to as effecting pretended miracles;—by ordinary objects, presented to the credulous through an obscure medium, thereby receiving exaggeration and distortion by the imagination, to such a degree as to forbid the excited beholder instituting an examination requisite to ascertain their real character;—or they are to be referred for an explanation to an occasional disordered condition of the optic nerve, by means of which fictitious images are introduced to the mind as real external existences.

It is well known to physiologists, that the optic nerve, in case of slight disease, is subject to illusions possessing every shade of character which is ascribed to ghosts; and that the auditory nerve likewise, when similarly affected, causes internal sounds, which have been depicted by the fancy as those fearful premonitions, termed warnings, which have at all times given alarm to those unacquainted with the phenomenon. In such state, like that of mental affection in dreams, the impressions made by external objects on the senses are weakened, or insufficient to excite the attention of the mind; while previous sensations in store become excited to more active combinations, in consequence of the disarranged state of the mental functions. In such conditions, pictures are exhibited to the mind from past sensations, in forms so impressive that they predominate over those representing external objects present on the retina. In such case, for instance, the impression made by the past sensation of dead or absent friends, or other objects of interest, will exclude the images made by external objects, present on the tablet of the retina, and the dead or absent are introduced, as really present to the mental view; and that in a form such as previous sensations or existing apprehensions may depict them. Thus the spectre presented to

Brutus, and that to the emperor Julian, on the eve of their approaching fate, were of such character as would most likely be represented to minds like theirs, disordered by anxiety, and excited by a lively sense of their critical condition, and the expected disastrous results which their superior sagacity, doubtless, foreshadowed as impending. The habiliments of the grave, as naturally the last and most durable impression made by the view of deceased friends, or the death scene which often haunts the conscience stricken assassin, would most likely be represented in such disordered mental condition. Absent friends would appear as last witnessed, unless apprehension of their death had aroused a stronger impression in the mind, in which case the funereal drama would be that most likely to be represented in the phantom scene.

Few of the relations respecting the appearance of ghosts, which history furnishes, are sufficiently attested to merit attention. Some of the best authenticated, like those appearing to Brutus, and the emperor Julian, are susceptible of explanation in the manner alluded to. Others, like those appearing to Nicolai, the patient of Doct. Abercrombie, and that of Mrs. A——, adduced by Sir David Brewster, were contemplated by their spectators as resulting from disordered action of the brain and

retina.* Others, if not as susceptible of solution as these, most probably originated from similar disordered conditions, which escaped the attention of their subjects. But far the most numerous are, unquestionably, but fictions of the imagination, exhibited in circumstances amid which the mind, from the excitement of fear, was incapable of investigating their true character. Was further evidence required to confirm the belief of the illusory nature of the spectral visions, reference might be made to the fact, that the greatest portion of these narratives are furnished from times of ignorance and gross credulity; and that in the ratio of the advancement of a rational science, has been a proportionate diminution of ghostly exhibitions. As regards the occasional coincidence between the phantom and subsequent death, it may be confidently remarked, that evidence is wanting which proves the fact that such relation exists in greater frequency than from other symptoms of disease; such as double vision, vertigo, deranged intellect, or severe pains of the head, which indicate grave affection of the brain. The phantom, together with the last named symptoms,

* For a particular description of the above cases, together with the pathological state on which they were dependent, see Brewster's Natural Magic, Letter III.

affording evidence of invading disease, while death is effected by its destructive progress. It will hence be perceived, that notwithstanding the supposed supernatural message with which the ghost-seer has been favored, he is furnished with no surer means of predicting a fatal result following, than has the physician who prognosticates from the other indications mentioned, both of which may be viewed with a degree of apprehension.

Diseases have a tendency to a fatal termination in a degree holding relation to the vital importance of the organs implicated. Those seriously affecting the brain, in consequence of its great influence over the vital functions, are ever to be regarded with apprehension, in whatever manner they are announced. But as ghosts are but a form of spectral illusion, indicating a state of disease in this organ, if they have proved more ominous of fatality than their congenial symptoms, it is doubtless to be explained by a reference to the aid which an imagination, excited by the vision, renders to the depressing tendency of disease on the vital functions.

So numerous are the instances in which spectral illusions have occurred to philosophical men personally, and have been presented to them as subjects for their observation; and so thoroughly have they received investigation

from them, with calm reflection, and a judgment unbiased by the fears which influence the timid on such occasions, that the above conclusions relative to the nature of ghosts, or spectres, may be received as in no degree problematical.*

Manifestations equally marvelous with those of vision, have occasionally been produced by the other senses; but in forms appropriate to the function of each. Imaginary sounds, as addresses from absent friends or strangers, unnatural voices, such as have been received by the credulous as ominous warnings, musical notes, &c. have been illusions originating from a disordered state of the auditory nerve, giving origin to a vast variety of speculation, and many unhappy superstitions.

The sense of feeling has supplied instances of either apathy or an extreme morbid sensitiveness which were so extraordinary, as to appear to those of ordinary sensibil-

---

* The stories and legends of phantom ships, as the flying Dutchman, and numerous other ærial spectres, which are stereotyped nursery tales, if of sufficient authenticity to deserve notice, admit of explanation from the presumption that they were representations of real objects concealed from view by an intervening medium, as hills, the earth's convexity, &c. which were made visible by the phenomenon of refraction in a manner alluded to in a previous note, page 41.

ity as partaking of the marvelous. Subjects of these affections have ever been adjudged by the credulous, as deriving their powers, either from the demoniacal or heavenly agencies. Persons in the apathetic state, have tolerated with apparent indifference the effects of fire, of cold, and mechanical irritants, to a degree that those possessing a healthy sense would be unable to endure.

Those in the latter condition have been able readily to detect objects so inapprecicable to ordinary feeling, that the ignorant, who witness such operation, have ever been prone to impute the process by which it is effected to a degree of prophetic inspiration.

Smell and taste, as related to feeling, have manifested similar extraordinary deviations from their natural functions, and have no doubt contributed to aid that sense in some of its erratic and inexplicable revelations. Thus, atmospheric changes, serpents, cats, and other animals and objects, are announced by subjects endowed with such powers, when in conditions which render them concealed from all the senses of ordinary persons.

Illusion, whether manifested by intellectual personifications, as ghosts; or by morbid association of ideas, exhibiting the false reasonings of the insane; or whether those of individual senses, as unnatural sounds, smells, tastes, or

feelings, are unquestionably dependent upon a degree of morbidly altered state of the brain in the one case, and an altered condition of the nerves of sense in the other. In the former, the disordered activity of the brain recalls former sensations by the aid of memory, and often depicts those susceptible of form, in their respective representative images, as ghosts, &c., or combine ideas in discordant trains, as in dreams or delirium.

In the instance of particular disordered senses, the actions of which are illusive, their functional representations are brought into activity, without the presence of the appropriate stimulus derived from the immediate impression of external objects; but effects representative of those, are no doubt caused by the impression which diseased action makes upon the local nerves on which specific sensible function depends.

All illusions, therefore, whether intellectual or sensitive, may be considered but as indications of a degree of disordered action of the whole, or a portion of the nervous system, and are worthy of attention mainly, in view of the consequences to which vitality may be subected by an uninterrupted progress of the unnatural action.

All these morbid manifestations of the brain and senses have ever been viewed with aston-

ishment and awe by the ignorant; and previous to modern improvement in physiological science, were subjects of wonder and wild speculation with the learned. Knaves and impostors have not failed to render them available sources from whence to derive facts, not only in support of their pretended demoniacal arts and sciences, but such disordered subjects have too frequently been exhibited to the credulous as objects miraculously endowed, with the view to confirm their faith in religious creeds, the intrinsic demerits of which required extraneous support of this character.

But it is to be hoped, that the era of popular traffic in such delusions is receding before the extending light of a more reasoning age; and that the period is not distant, when these affections of the nervous system shall be divested of their marvels, by having their rank assigned, as tangible realities, in the catalogue of bodily derangements requiring, no less than other diseases, the attentive care of the physician.

SECTION V.

*Ecstasy, Trance, &c.**

Of a character similar to that of dreams, are modern visions, ecstacy, and trance. The mutual phenomena presented in these, admit of a like explanation; with the exception, however, that the former is characterized by fanciful combinations of ideas during a state of sleep; the latter by extravagant exaltations of mental action, accompanied by like illusions, exhibited during a state of wakefulness. In these conditions, such mental abstraction from sense are effected by means of the preponder-

---

* Ecstacy and trance have, by some nosologists, been considered as distinct species of a genus of the general class embracing all nervous diseases. This is doubtless most expedient in a description having reference to medical treatment; but as it is designed to notice them only as milder and more temporary affections, occurring in similarly constituted subjects, dependent upon an analagous state of the nervous system, and originating from the same, or like causes, it is deemed preferable and proper to notice them as varying forms of the same affections, presenting in their different aspects, but degrees or varieties of symptoms, exhibited in variously constituted subjects, and modified mainly by the diverse application of the causes from whence they originate. Many of the common phenomena of ecstacy are manifested in several nervous affections;

ance of spiritual conceptions, that the realities of both sense and reason cease to control combinations of thought. The active imagination in this condition being uncontroled, personifies beings, or depicts scenes, as realities which had previously been made the subject of intense meditation, or the objects of ardent hopes or fears.

In extasy and trances, as in some forms of dreams, the corporeal organs sympathetically partaking of the excited mental state, either exhibit gesticulations, or other action corresponding in extravagance with the passing hallucinations; or being deprived of their ordinary mental stimulus, yield to entire torpor and quiescence.

Although imposture and deception may occasionally assume the condition represented in visions, ecstacy, and trance, yet there can be no doubt that their manifestations are mainly involuntary actions induced by existing im-

---

trance in some others, but their forms here considered, essentially differ from these; and as they possess the relationship alluded to, and as they are rarely the objects of medical treatment, it is deemed far preferable to discuss their character in the mode here adopted.

Somnambulism and catalepsy, although dependent upon similar constitutional peculiarities, but originating from causes of a different nature, have been noticed with the view only to exhibit them as possessing a character of relationship with the above named affections.

pressions, acting upon persons nervously susceptible, but generally of weak intellects, whose minds, therefore, are incapable of sustaining normal combinations of thought, when subjects of the importance of those involving their spiritual destiny are impressively presented to their consideration.

With the object of exhibiting what have been denominated religious ecstasy and trance, as phenomena, which, like other bodily affections, are dependent upon natural agencies, such as ordinarily influence organic structure, a reference will briefly be made to the mental and physiological condition upon which they are conceived to be dependent. This reference is made for the purpose of dissipating the marvels and superstition with which they have been habitually contemplated by many, and to combat what is believed an error of the most vital import,—the prevailing belief that they are the product of an active supernatural inspiration.

It is a characteristic trait of the mind, that when long intently occupied on any particular subject, it is prone to fall into a monotonous train of thought, (so to speak,) which eventually becomes so predominant as to engross its entire attention, to the exclusion of objects ordinarily brought to its notice by the senses. So predominant frequently becomes

the influence of these engrossing trains of thought, in biasing the judgment, that by excluding a comparison with the trains of sensation of diverse character, its decisions are often extremely erroneous, and even fantastic and ridiculous.

Every inordinate emotion and passion, of sudden production, or when indulged in a less degree for a considerable period, tends to produce this unnatural obliquity in mental decision.

The mind, when engaged in a continued concentration of its powers, is apt to depict the objects of its contemplation with such factitious coloring, that by the exaggerations of the imagination, they are represented as actually present personifications; or simple ideas are combined in such a manner that anticipated future results are exhibited as actual realities in progress of instant performance. Thus anxiety regarding health frequently depicts results of disease, whether real or imaginary, which have no existence except as morbid conceptions of the intellect which originates them. So unnatural, occasionally, are the exaggerations of the imagination, when stimulated by mental anxiety regarding health, that its subjects are led to the conviction of organic changes of structure, incompatible with the continuance of life, and often

of metamorphoses to other states of being. These fantastic conceits not unfrequently exist in a degree that they not only excite the commisseration, but the ridicule of friends, and often repel the logic and skill of the medical adviser aimed at their removal.

Anger and hatred distort their objects, and the motives that have aroused their energies into fictions of their own engendering, which stimulate to acts the most disproportionate to the offence, and therefore become unjustifiable. Jealousy often so obscures the rational data on which accurate conclusions may be based, that imagination magnifies

"Trifles light as air,"

into

"Confirmations strong as proofs from Holy writ."

The avaricious propensity eventually engrosses the active faculties of the mind, and visions of wealth, or the horrors of poverty, stimulate to indefinite acquisition, as an imaginary good worthy the endurance of the most unnatural and painful privations, and even causes a sacrifice of integrity to a practice of the basest moral obliquities. Pride and ambition, when inordinately indulged, present their objects in a form so alluring, that fame or self is represented as alone worthy of consideration, and the benevolent and social feelings become sacrificed in their giddy vortex.

These derangements of the mental affections, as results of ordinary impulses and incidents of life, are often sufficient to unhinge the mind to a degree that the most wild hallucinations control its actions and conclusions.

There are influences, however, which act upon the mind, when diverted to certain trains of reflection, with a force more impressive and energetic, and which engross its attention more exclusively than the objects ordinarily submitted to its attention. Such are those which are derived from a contemplation of the future responsibilities of man, as regards his spiritual and eternal destinies, and the rewards and penalties which are presented to his view in that state.

These subjects, when presented to the imagination with a force adequate to excite the mind to an exclusive and intense concentration, are susceptible of arousing the passions to a state of extravagant exaltation, which precludes attention to the ordinary impressions made on the senses, and leads, not unfrequently, to a manifestation of bodily action corresponding with the existing trains of excited ideas. This is the state which has received the denomination of ecstasy. A different degree of affection, from the same causes, but operating in varied force, or upon

subjects differently constituted, may have the effect to suppress the corporeal powers, while the active conceptions, (moulded by a like excited imagination,) are depicted as present personalities of the spiritual world, performing in fancied characters, whose actions ever correspond with the train of ideas passing in the mind, from which imagination derives its plastic materials. This is the affection termed religious trance, and may be considered the more advanced stage of the ecstatic condition described above.

These singular manifestations of an engrossing religious meditation, are generally induced by impressive representations of future happiness or misery through eloquent appeals to the passions of persons possessing a highly excitable nervous temperament. These, from natural infirmity of judgment, are often incapable of exercising a rational discretion on occasions in which their active emotions are aroused. More rarely they originate from self-directed meditation on the subject of future rewards and punishments, excited by attention to former vivid impressions, recalled by the aid of memory; or by a lively reflection upon the important facts having relation to their spiritual responsibilities. Whatever may have been the influence by which the mind has been induced to its excited train of meditations, it be-

comes temporarily inadequate for the performance of its accustomed discriminating decision; and what is most singular, the fictions which are embraced in this state, are generally adopted as facts in its history, after a restoration to its normal condition.*

---

* It has ever been a mooted question with metaphysicians, whether the mind, during its corporeal connection, at any time exists in a state of total inactivity or thoughtless quiescence. It has been contended by some, that in every condition of sleep, however profound, or grave disease of the brain, as apoplexy, &c. combinations of ideas continue in a degree of activity; but that their trains, in a state of deep natural sleep, or in the apparent unconsciousness of disease, are only incapable of being recalled on the change to a state of wakefulness, in consequence of the failure of memory to record them on its tablet. In such view, it is only the mental acts of imperfect sleep, or less grave disease, which become the subject of recollection on their removal. Others suppose that mental action, in the more sound forms of sleep, or in the deep lethargy of disease, participate of the torpor which enchains the action of the senses, and becomes, like these, dormant and inactive.

If the latter theory is correct, it is manifest that a temporary blank is produced in the history of mental action, during each affection of causes producing this temporary sympathy with its corporeal consociate. Although evidence may be wanting to disprove this last position, yet (whether considered as a positive or negative argument) it can be made but little available in proof of skeptical materialism.

It must appear manifest, that during its union with matter, the mind is in a dependent position, and must

Although a due degree of zeal may actuate the subjects thus demonstrably affected, yet

---

necessarily, from the nature of the connection, be subjected by sympathy to the various affections which influence the latter; consequently, the mind is in a degree made subject to the laws by which matter is governed.

Whatever judgment, therefore, may be formed of the action or affection of the two agents in a state of connection, it is inapplicable to that of either, when a dissolution of such union is effected. For the mind having, by such event, escaped the grosser sympathies in which it held participation, must be presumed to recover the capabilities of its own inherent and subtle nature, and to act in conformity with its specific and independent laws; as it is manifest, from observation, that matter reverts to the control of the physical agencies, when vitality withholds its superior influence.

Inductive reasoning must lead to the conclusion, that the union of agencies ordinarily subjected to independent diverse laws, would result in a mode of action essentially modified from that of each, when solely governed by its original influences. We accordingly find in the connection of matter, vitality, and mind, as existing in a state of organization, that the former (during such union) acquires properties not existing in its ordinary inorganic condition; and at the dissolution of the connection, it manifestly assumes the more limited and inferior abilities derived from its ordinary specific laws. It is therefore a reasonable conclusion, that the superior agent, the mind, (which in the condition of union had suffered restraint from its grosser associate,) would regain its native powers by the assumption of the action permitted by the law of its original nature. It may then be conceived, that, as in trance or ecstasy,

there is reason to fear, that many of their number are self-deceived enthusiasts, wanting in profitable knowledge, who therefore have admitted the natural promptings of a highly excited imagination, as evidence of a degree of inspiration and divine favoritism, which has been denied the more rational cultivators of genuine spiritual devotion.

Religion, as being the practical science of a future state, ought, unquestionably, to be an object of primary consideration, and its cultivation and acquirement becomes the duty of

---

which has been induced by inordinate causes affecting the mind, the influence of this should, in a degree, acquire an ascendancy over its material associate, and thereby, temporarily, be enabled to act from the ability derived from its own independent laws of action; or that in case of bodily infirmity, in which the mind has escaped a sympathizing action, its power should acquire a like preponderance, and exercise energies accordant with its untrammeled abilities. In either supposition it will be observed, that the effect might be a like extension of ordinary mental capability, provided the diverse causes produced a like suspension of their relative dependencies, through which the action of each receives essential modification, and indeed controls all their consociate actions.

The above, however, is only a speculative suggestion; but may not be wholly unworthy of consideration in a contemplation of the abstruse phenomena of the animal economy, as well as to meet the arguments, equally speculative, adduced by materialists in the support of their depressing and gloomy creed.

every rational responsible being. The evidence of its possession, however, is by no means exhibited in these passionate demonstrations; but it is more convincingly manifested by a rational contemplation of its requirements, and a consistent conformity of the human attributes to the laws of Deity, enstamped both in nature and revelation. These, only, intellect recognizes as based upon principles of a reason worthy the infinite Intelligence whence they emanated.

The founders of the various fanatical sects have well understood the power which the faculty of veneration is capable of exercising over the passions and imagination. They have therefore craftily constructed their tenets and formularies, in a manner whereby they have availed themselves of its influence for the acquisition of proselytes to their creeds. Hence Mormonism is enforced by its appeals to its immediate revelations, and its marvelous gift of tongues; and most of its devotees, no doubt through the influence of the mental principle suggested and biased by the conceits of a vivid imagination, conceive themselves the participants of the marvelous gift. It is likewise probable, that the hallucination which leads them to embrace the absurd doctrine, imbues the senseless jargon which they

invent, with abounding ideas of the most grave import.

The impostor Matthias proclaimed his own nature as partaking of the divine essence, and his brutish eccentricities, through the exaggerating medium of a morbidly active imagination, appeared to his followers (some of whom possessed otherwise respectable intellectual capacities) as satisfactory evidence of his claims. The bliss of Mahomet's sensual paradise was depicted with such intensity, in the visions of his fanatic soldiers, as to cause them to disregard temporal life, so far as to rush to destruction in battle, with the view to enter upon its immortal enjoyment.*

---

* At the siege of a fortress (the name of which is not within the recollection of the author) by the Turkish army, under one of their most victorious and distinguished sultans, the besiegers became dispirited, in consequence of the failure of their variously repeated assaults for its reduction, and were on the eve of abandoning the hopeless undertaking. At this juncture, a private soldier, inspired by his religious as well as patriotic zeal, announced to his comrades that he beheld a vision of the black eyed houris of Mahomet's paradise, beckoning them to an embrace, from the tops of the lofty turreted walls of the besieged. The entranced enthusiast rushed forward, at the same time to the wall and to death, followed by his comrades, who had imbibed the sympathetic contagion, and who immediately shared the same fate. The infection became general in the army, and a furious assault of the castle ensued, which,

In the mental phenomena of dreams, ghosts, insanity and trance, there exists no inconsiderable degree of relationship. Each are characterized by the similar illusory images which are attendant. They are, however, diverse as regards the causes, and the physical condition from which they originate. The former have been noticed as consisting of an incongruous combination of sensations in store in the mind, in a state of sleep, without the immediate action of the senses; though the passing dreamy trains may be essentially influenced and varied by suggestions directed through these.* Dreams are conducted in-

---

after a desperate resistance by the besieged, and a fearful carnage of the assailants, was demolished, and its brave defenders fell a sacrifice to the almost superhuman energies excited by the illusive vision of the fanatic.

* In sleep, whether attended by dreams or not, the attention is suspended by the existing torpor; therefore, impressions made on the senses are not recognized, except as suggestive of objects connected with the trains of thought passing in the mind, or as having the effect to change the trains to others having a relation to the impressions made. The senses have not unfrequently thus been employed to extort secrets from dreamers, in the unguarded condition of the mind in sleep. Thus whispering in the ear of a dreamer, will often obtain a pertinent reply to questions relative to the passing mental action. A person entering the room of a sleeper, often suggests a dream of intended violence and rob-

dependent of the corrections of attention, which is ever quiescent in a state of sleep; hence arises the disconnected chain of events which transpire in mental activity of sleep. Ghosts have been considered as illusory images, or personifications, represented to the mind in a state of wakefulness. These are dependent for existence upon a disordered condition of the brain and nervous system, holding no further importance than the indications which they furnish of the morbid actions which give them existence.

Religious trance is, likewise, usually attended with a variety of personified images, produced by a state of excited mental activity, mostly of a spiritual nature, occurring in individuals of imaginative, rather than rational susceptibilities. These are excited by external impressions directed through the passions, or by concentrated attention to subjects relating to future responsibilities. Like the

---

bery. Taste, odors, or cutaneous irritation, &c. frequently change the existing dreamy associations to others suggested by the new sensitive irritation. Such impressions, however, instead of directing the mind to the action of objects really present, from which they originate, serve but to stimulate to combinations of ideas previously existing on its tablet, which are connected with the sense irritated, or with which it has been associated.

visions, in case of ghosts, these occur in a state of wakefulness; but unlike those of dreams, or insanity, a connection is sustained in the train, in consequence of their being conducted by the attention which, in the others, is wanting or is desultory.

As the visions of ecstasy and trance are the suggestions of a devotional propensity, they are generally attended with affections, such as a lively imagination would naturally depict of the realms of bliss or misery. Accordingly it will be found, that the drama exhibited to the conceptions of the enthusiast, ever holds a correspondence in extravagance with the exalted state of the mental affection which is instrumental in its induction. As in dreams, the scenes represented in trance or ecstasy are dependent on the causes which suggest and originate the phenomena; but as the last are conducted under the direction of a vigorous attention, a far greater consistency of the passing trains is manifested.

An essential diversity exists between the manifestations of ecstasy and trance; the one being an exhibition of rapturous exclamation, accompanied with excited and extravagant corporeal action; while the mind, in the other, being so intently occupied with the personifications presented for its contemplation, withdraws its influence from the body,

and suffers it to remain in a state of inaction. The primary cause, however, of both being the same, they are to be considered as but different forms or degrees of the same affection, producing their various results mainly through the force of circumstances in which the impressions are made, and the diversity of temperament presented in different individuals affected. Ecstasy is that stage of the affection which may be considered incipient, in which the mind is more partially withdrawn from the dominion of the senses, although their impressions are but little, or in no degree, the subject of attention, in consequence of the concentration of mental conception on objects of a supernatural character. The attention is so directed to the hallucinations present, that sensible impression is disregarded, unless applied in more than ordinary force. In such case, attention may temporarily be given to ordinary sensation; but so predominant is the mental train, that it immediately reclaims the attention, on the diminution of the cause of its arrest.

In the more advanced stage of the affection of trance, insensibility to external impressions exists, often nearly representing a state of death. The vital functions are performed with diminished energy; the eyes become fixed, though the countenance may ap-

pear otherwise but little changed; and the muscular system is immovable, to a degree that the limbs usually remain in the position where placed. Indeed there is little doubt, that many have suffered vital inhumation in this often death-simulating condition. On the contrary, in religious trance, as in ecstasy, the mind is occasionally in a preternaturally elevated state, and its conceptions become magnified into a conceived arena, within which are introduced by the imagination, the greatest variety of spiritual images and objects in dramatic performance. So vivid are sometimes the conceptions in trance, (as would appear from the relation of its visions,) that the mind or soul of its subjects seems endowed with temporary energies, surpassing those manifested as the joint products with its now inert earthly tenement. The combination of thought in ideal pictures possesses such activity, that, in conception, space becomes annihilated and the mental wanderer, in imagination, is transported to the regions of his contemplation, (which is most commonly heaven or hell,) and his affections are accordant with the fancied scenes amid which he mingles.*

---

* The maid of Orleans, the celebrated Joan of Arc, was undoubtedly an ecstatic enthusiast, whose visions were the natural inspirations of an ardent devotional

and suffers it to remain in a state of inaction. The primary cause, however, of both being the same, they are to be considered as but different forms or degrees of the same affection, producing their various results mainly through the force of circumstances in which the impressions are made, and the diversity of temperament presented in different individuals affected. Ecstasy is that stage of the affection which may be considered incipient, in which the mind is more partially withdrawn from the dominion of the senses, although their impressions are but little, or in no degree, the subject of attention, in consequence of the concentration of mental conception on objects of a supernatural character. The attention is so directed to the hallucinations present, that sensible impression is disregarded, unless applied in more than ordinary force. In such case, attention may temporarily be given to ordinary sensation; but so predominant is the mental train, that it immediately reclaims the attention, on the diminution of the cause of its arrest.

In the more advanced stage of the affection of trance, insensibility to external impressions exists, often nearly representing a state of death. The vital functions are performed with diminished energy; the eyes become fixed, though the countenance may ap-

pear otherwise but little changed; and the muscular system is immovable, to a degree that the limbs usually remain in the position where placed. Indeed there is little doubt, that many have suffered vital inhumation in this often death-simulating condition. On the contrary, in religious trance, as in ecstasy, the mind is occasionally in a preternaturally elevated state, and its conceptions become magnified into a conceived arena, within which are introduced by the imagination, the greatest variety of spiritual images and objects in dramatic performance. So vivid are sometimes the conceptions in trance, (as would appear from the relation of its visions,) that the mind or soul of its subjects seems endowed with temporary energies, surpassing those manifested as the joint products with its now inert earthly tenement. The combination of thought in ideal pictures possesses such activity, that, in conception, space becomes annihilated and the mental wanderer, in imagination, is transported to the regions of his contemplation, (which is most commonly heaven or hell,) and his affections are accordant with the fancied scenes amid which he mingles.*

---

* The maid of Orleans, the celebrated Joan of Arc, was undoubtedly an ecstatic enthusiast, whose visions were the natural inspirations of an ardent devotional

Several diseases, as hysteria, insanity, epilepsey, &c.; many poisonous drugs, as alcohol,

---

temperament, aided by a patriotic zeal for the salvation of the liberties of her country. That she was herself a designing impostor, few will believe; but it is more questionable whether she was not the dupe of government agencies, employed as an instrument for arousing a languid French patriotism to a resistance of English oppression. There is little doubt that she entertained full confidence in the inspiration which she announced, and likewise that she was the heavenly commissioned agent for the protection of her country's liberty.

Whatever may have been the opinion of the French king and his advisers, relative to her claims, it is certain that she possessed popular confidence in the divine agency which she assumed. The result of such belief strikingly illustrates the superiority which spiritual conceptions, when brought into activity, hold over those of a temporal nature, in exciting the mind to energetic action. It is probable that the main facts, giving origin to this strange history, will ever remain concealed; but though the causes which led to its development were manifestly illusion, with, perhaps, the aid of device, the effects possessed a reality and importance no less than that of the restoration of liberty and distinction to a nation previously existing in a state of degradation and oppression. The entire transaction is an illustration of the adage, that "truth is often more strange than fiction."

As the case of the Maid of Orleans was doubtless one representing the ecstatic form of trance, another may be mentioned strongly illustrative of the more grave and visibly inanimate degree of the affection; in which ordinary physical action had apparently ceased, while that of the mind had assumed an expanded range, accordant with a conception of its mode of operation

opium, hyoscyamus, thorn apple, (stramonium,) hemlock, (cicuta,) and some others, occasion-

---

when freed from its corporeal embarrassment. It is during such affection that its action appears as under the guidance of its own peculiar laws of action. The case is that of Henry Engelbrecht, as related by himself, and may be found in Blackwood's Magazine, May No., 1847.

"In the year 1623, exhausted by intense mental excitement of a religious kind, and by abstinence from food, after hearing a sermon which strongly affected him, he felt as if he could combat no more, so he gave in and took to his bed. There he lay a week without tasting any thing but the bread and wine of the sacrament. On the eighth day, he thought he fell into the death struggle; death seemed to invade him from below upwards; his body became rigid; his hands and feet insensible; his tongue and lips incapable of motion; gradually his sight failed him, but he still heard the laments and consultations of those around him. This gradual demise lasted from mid-day till eleven at night, when he heard the watchman; then he lost consciousness of outward impressions. But an elaborate vision of immense detail began; the theme of which was, that he was first carried down to hell, and looked into the place of torment; from thence, quicker than an arrow, was he borne to paradise. In these abodes of suffering and happiness, he saw and heard and smelled things unspeakable. Those scenes, though long in apprehension, were short in time, for he came enough to himself by twelve o'clock, again to hear the watchman. It took him another twelve hours to come round entirely. His hearing was first restored; then his sight; feeling and motion followed; as soon as he could move his limbs he rose. He felt himself stronger than before the trance."

ally resemble trance and ecstasy in the production of similar false images, mental exaltation, and bodily immobility. While, however, the false conceptions induced by disease, or drugs, are desultory combinations of ideal trains, bearing a resemblance to those of dreams, the visions of ecstasy and trance are arranged in consistent connection, and though usually originating from external impressions made through the senses of sight and hearing, they may be continued to an indefinite period, solely by ideas of consciousness. While, likewise, the mental images resulting from disease and medicines are painful or agreeable, in accordance with the character of the bodily stimulus by which they are prompted, and usually subside on the termination of the morbid actions which give them origin, the spiritual array (being the product of emotion, unaccompanied by diseased action,) commonly continues in normal and consistent trains, until interrupted or dissevered, either by overpower-

---

This case, while it exhibits the phenomena of trance, at the same time goes far to demonstrate, that it is a peculiar condition of the nervous system upon which it is dependent; as it will appear manifest, that the ascetic life, and bodily exhaustion, from insufficient diet, &c. under which they occurred, were causes well suited to induce the morbid susceptibility with which, it has been contended, the affection is connected.

ing corporeal impressions, acting through the senses, or by the exhaustion of the cerebral force by which they are sustained.

The difference of effect following the subsidence of hallucinations from diseased action, and the emotion producing trance, consists in the greater or less debilitated condition of the system, (occasioned by the latter,) arising from the unnatural action during its affection, while in trance the functions are little impaired, because, (during its continuance,) they have remained in a state of inaction and repose. This preservation of vital functions in trance, however, exists only in cases of quiescence of the body, as in the condition of its extatic activity, from the passing emotion, and the active scenes pictured to the mind, it must necessarily (as a condition of its nature) suffer a degree of exhaustion.

It has been stated, that in the state of trance there exists an entire subsidence of voluntary action, during which the vital functions are performed with diminished force. This is owing to the withdrawal from these of a portion of their ordinary nervous influence, for the sustentation of the exalted mental energy in the production of the visions which engross the mind's attention. This explanation is derived from a recognized principle of the animal economy, that exalted concentrated

action existing in an organ, can alone be sustained by a withdrawal of that ordinarily assigned for the support of the functions of its associates; and hence, inductive reasoning, from the known existence of this physiological law, would lead to the conclusion, that bodily torpor, like that witnessed in a state of trance, would be the result of the highly concentrated mental action constituting the principal phenomena of the affection.

The various degrees of affection manifested between the active demonstrations of ecstasy and trance, have heretofore been referred to the varied effects of circumstances and temperament. In aid of these influences may be mentioned an important agency in determining the character of these phenomena, derived from the relative susceptibilities existing in different individuals, between the brain and nervous system. In this view, persons of greater cerebral impressibility, through favoring causes, will present the manifestations of more marked trance, with its array of illusory visions, while ecstasy, with its varying degrees of corporeal action, is the effect of similar causes, acting upon persons whose nervous systems (the primary agents of animal motion) possess preponderating susceptibilities.

In the notice of dreams and ghosts, as premonitory indications of coming events, it was objected, that their vague and indefinite indications failed to render them advantageous to their subjects, and therefore, that the dubious intimations were irreconcilable with the divine benevolent economy conceived as prompting the unavailable admonition. An argument derivable from the same source, and of similar application, is worthy of consideration in an investigation of the subject of religious trance. It is presumed as not claimed, that the supposed inspiration of this affection, imparts a revelation of superior precepts for the direction of the spiritual devotion of its favored recipients. It is, therefore, difficult to discern in such manifestations, a wise and benevolent object, as it must appear evidently partial and discriminating in the distribution of favors to christian professors, and manifestly in derogation of the attributes ascribed to the common impartial Father of their faith.

Indeed, as facts are wanting which prove that the subjects of religious trance excel their more sedate and reasoning brethren in their perseverance in faith, and in the practice of the christian graces; and as observation will show that the affection is chiefly, if not exclusively, manifested in persons of nervously

excitable temperament, it may be considered as an established fact, that the phenomena of trance are worthy of interest, mainly, as being demonstrable of the physiological, or perhaps pathological singularities, occasionally manifested by the brain and nervous system, rather than as spiritual impressions derived from a supernatural source.*

Notwithstanding, however, the views which have been given of trance and its phenomena, it is little probable that a large portion of its subjects merit a rank among deceivers and impostors; (a charge not unfrequently made;) but rather they ought generally to be viewed with commisseration and sympathy, as enthusiasts who are denied the physical ability of sustaining an equipoise of intellect, when contemplating a subject which, above all others,

---

* A writer in Blackwood's Magazine, June No. 1847, thus justly remarks: "Without at all comprehending the real character of the power called into play, mankind seems to have found out, by a 'mera palpatio,' by instinctive experiment and lucky groping in the dark, that in the stupor of trance, the mind occasionally stumbles upon odds and ends of strange knowledge and prescience. The phenomenon was never for an instant suspected of lying in the order of nature. It was construed to suit the occasion and times, either into divine inspiration, or diabolical whisperings. But it was always supernatural."

demands a dispassionate consideration, as involving eternal destiny.*

Somnambulism, or sleep walking, is a form of trance differing from those mentioned, as it occurs during the ordinary sleep of the senses, and is doubtless the production of a degree of internal bodily derangement. In this affection, the faculties of the mind are in a state of activity, while the senses are locked in the torpor of sleep. The corporeal organs, however, are stimulated to action by the energy of the mental trains controling volition, and prompting it to act in conformity with the passing conceptions and trains of thought. A variety of acts are often executed in this condition, of which, as in dreams, previous waking thoughts are the prototypes; but

---

*It is not designed in the above discussion of the character of dreams, visions, &c. to include or question the authenticity, or impair the belief of those announced in the scriptures as prophetic revelations. These were exhibited under circumstances, and accompanied with internal and external evidence, of a character wholly wanting in those here rejected as factitious and spurious. As it is conceived that the period of miracles and prophecy has long since ceased, it is deemed useful that the modern notions, which impute to these ordinary and extraordinary vital manifestations, a prophetic character, should be combatted by such existing physiological and pathological facts as are believed adequate for the solution of their phenomena.

which, not unfrequently, are of a character that might render them difficult of performance by the affected individual in his ordinary condition. A sort of intellectual sense appears to supply the office of the natural senses in these cases, by which opposing objects are avoided, and expedients are embraced, for the furtherance of plans in progress of execution, with an accuracy equaling those of sensible dictation. This form of the affection resembles dreams, by its being the execution, or performance in action, of ideas previously existing in the mind; but it holds the distinction of its trains of action by, and being conducted under the supervision of a wakeful attention, and, therefore, possessing consistency in their combinations. It resembles both religious trance and ecstasy, by its union of the consistent mental activity of the one, with the corporeal action of the other. An exalted state of mental combination is evinced, during the affection, by the elevated positions, as the roofs of buildings, precipices, &c. which its subjects often seek, as well as by the daring feats which they not unfrequently encounter. A distinction consists, in its objects usually being those of the temporal, instead of the spiritual world.

It has been the surprising fortune of somnambulism that, although its manifestations

possess a singularity far surpassing those of dreams, and often equaling those of ghosts and its correlative, religious trance, yet little superstition has been attached to its character and phenomena, while the others have ever been a prolific source of supernatural reference, and have, by the credulous, been objects of awe and wonder, and not unfrequently of dread and apprehension.

The more grave form of trance is the nervous disease termed catalepsy, in which both the corporeal and mental powers, especially the latter, appear temporally in a state of total extinction, such as has, occasionally, been difficult of discrimination from actual dissolution. This, like most other diseases of the nervous class, arises from morbid causes, affecting particularly the functions of the brain and nervous system, and, like them, is to be viewed with apprehension, as regards its results on life. As the description of this form of trance is pathological, and would embrace a professional detail of causes and effects of disease, it will be omitted, as not accordant with the adopted plan of discussion.

SECTION VI.

Empiricim and Quackery—Credulity in Medicine.

If man's inherent credulity and love of the marvelous have been made instrumental in subjugating his reason, by means of a factitious theology and a ghostly machinery, effected by a perversion of his religious and social instincts, they have likewise been the avenues through which his legitimate temporal interests have been assailed by designing pretenders to his welfare, in matters connected with his health and life; the instinctive love of which is ever, with him, an object of primary care and solicitude. Diseases are mysterious agents, the causes of which, generally, lie concealed among the hidden arcana of nature, and therefore have too successfully eluded the attempts of the wise for their development. Hence, in periods of ignorance they were conceived to be the inflictions of malign deities, and their removal, consequently, was supposed an appropriate duty of priests and diviners, through the instrumentality of prayers, incantations, and a variety of mysterious agencies.

In Greece, and, in some degree, in Rome, priests were the principal physicians, and medication was administered at the shrines of temples dedicated to the art of healing. There an adequate votive fee insured prescription from the presiding god himself, who was introduced to the credulous patient, doubtless by the optical deceptions heretofore alluded to; or, in the case of patients of lesser consideration, through his intermediate agent the priest. It is to be presumed, however, that a large portion of the afflicted of disease, were not of sufficient consideration, or that they did not possess the means requisite to proffer a sacrifice adequate to obtain such distinguished prescription; or that, in consequence of more grave disease, many would be unable to endure the fatigue of a personal attendance at the templar fountain of health. Such were necessarily assigned to the care of the empirics, or ancient quacks. These, by confident assurances, by incantations, by magic and incense, with the pretension of propitiating the malign deity, or, more properly, malaria, aided by secret nostrums, like their successors of the present day, did not fail speedily of terminating the disease, or the existence of their patients.

Others, however, of weaker faith in mystery and the marvelous, who reasoned that

disease was but a physical evil, consisting in organic embarrassments induced by the interposition of unfriendly physical elements, were content with physicians possessing a knowledge of its nature and causes, but of far less pretensions. Those who, like Hypocrates and Galen, were educated in the rational or matter of fact schools, who possessed the qualification of a scientific knowledge of the organic structure, its diseases, with their causes, and the agents which observation had suggested as efficacious in their removal, it is to be presumed, possessed the confidence and the patronage of their wise and reasoning cotemporaries. Such, disdaining to barter truth for a popular reputation, or temporary interest, have, by their labors in the field of science, not only added a redeeming lustre to human nature, but have erected to themselves monuments of fame, which the intelligent in all succeeding ages have venerated, and to whose names will ever be yielded a due homage of gratitude, while those of their boasting and popular rivals have long since passed into merited oblivion.

In the period succeeding the downfall of the Roman Empire, in which science and literature were nearly extinguished, delusions, dark and deep, took possession of the minds of a large portion of mankind. Reason then

appeared divested of its legitimate supremacy in the conduct of human actions, and knavery and imposture flourished with a success unparalleled in the history of nations holding pretensions to civilization. Medical science, during this period, became merged in the grossest empiricism, and, as a consequence, the most absurd theories relative to diseases and their causes, were embraced by popular credulity, with an avidity proportionate to their discordance with reason, and the less interesting deductions of common sense.

The principal object of the pretended sciences of this period, seemed to be the development of the supposed sublime mysteries of alchemy and astrology. The first of these depicted visions of the philosopher's stone, to which knavery and credulity alike ascribed a power of transmutation of the baser metals into gold, the universal solvent, and the famous Catholicon, by whose power it was hoped, that a state of immortal youth might be sustained by its resistance to the hitherto mutable character of the human system; while the latter assumed to unfold the astral influences on the organic system and its diseases, together with the nature of plants and other remedies. These, by virtue of a corresponding influence, derived from the same mysterious source, were presumed appropriate to

sustain or restore a healthy condition of vitality.

At a period in which follies, like these, were able to engross popular attention; in which distinction, in their so-called science, was graduated by the degree of mysticism and unintelligible jargon assumed by its professors, and understood neither by the deluder nor deluded, we need not be surprised at the ridiculous pretentions resorted to by the rival empirics, to promote their interests by exciting a lively faith in a public eager for the novelties which their inventions embraced. We accordingly find these learned worthies contending in support of the potent virtues of mullen for the cure of grave diseases; of liverwort, and a host of other, the most inert members of the vegetable kingdom. The virtues of each (it was contended) were derived from the occult influence of the particular planet to whose dominancy it was assigned. What must be supposed, at that time, to have distracted the anxious invalid, in his choice among so many infallible "*health restoratives*," doubtless was the fact that, like the modern nostrum-monger, the advocates of each panacea adduced his extended catalogue of wonderful cures effected by his special favorite. Nor need we wonder that relics of saints, that amulets, and the most disgusting members of the animal kingdom, as

toads, snails, spiders, bats, bugs, and many other abhorrent objects, should be administered, as of potent efficacy in arresting the most desperate maladies. Shakspeare, doubtless, derived the recipe of the hell-broth in Macbeth from the medicaments of this period. This would have been no less abhorrent, though less poetical, had the principal ingredients been thus more literally enumerated:

"Bones of saints, with slimy slugs;
Warts of toads, abhorrent bugs;
Blind worm stings, and toe of frogs;
Wool of bats, and tongue of dogs;
Spider's webs, and lizzard's legs;
Armed the empiric with his drugs."

It would be no less tedious than unprofitable to enumerate the various arts by which the credulous public, eager for novelty, were deluded by the quacks of this period, distinguished for its excesses of mental delusion. That some of their patients survived their ordeal is probable; but that a much larger portion were victims to the confidence reposed in their contemptible nostrums, there can be no rational doubt. The philosophic physician is enabled to perceive, from facts derived from his common observation, that their various formula of prescription might prove efficacious in many diseases of the ner-

vous system, requiring the excitement of strong mental emotion. This their disgusting exhibitions could not fail to arouse, as their mysticisms and incantations would, doubtless, induce such superstitious awe, as to prove a necessary and adequate stimulus to excite the torporized vital energies of the system in which the malady alone consisted. In such conditions of disease, the cure, by these means, ceases to be a marvel. For it is not difficult to conceive that, when aided by the faith inspired by the blind assurance of the quack, such mental remedy, with the credulous, may surpass, in its effects on particular diseases, any rational prescription, unattended by the emotion which the mysterious agent excites in the mind of the confiding expectant of its power.

Baglivi, an old but distinguished physician, quaintly remarks on this subject, "I can scarcely express how much the conversation of the physician influences even the life of the patient, and modifies his complaints. For a physician powerful in speech, and skillful in addressing the feelings of his patient, adds so much to the power of his remedies, and excites so much confidence in his treatment, as frequently to overcome powerful diseases with very feeble remedies; which more learned doctors, languid and indifferent in speech,

could not have cured with the best remedies that man could produce."

There is no question but that most of the success which attends empiricism, results from the mental influences with which its prescriptions are accompanied. But as most diseases consist in such derangements, either of structure or function, as require, in addition to this, the application of appropriate remedies, it is deplorable to contemplate the multiform evils which must necessarily have accrued to health and life by the neglect of these, in consequence of the bestowal of a misguided confidence in the pretended specifics of the empiric, which, if not directly noxious, are inefficient and worthless.

If, in the dark ages of literature, empiricism of the grossest character usurped the functions of medical science, and introduced the grossest superstitions relative to diseases and their cures, modern periods are not without parallels of medical credulity, equally gross and irrational, though varying in the forms in which it is exhibited. By adverting to the present state of medicine, we shall be able to derive abundant evidence of a predominant propensity, in a large portion of mankind, for the captivating influence of the novel and the marvelous, in matters relating to health, as well as for the existence of knaves who cater

to amiable weakness, for the purpose of obtaining fame and fortune as the reward of their unholy avocation.

If the present period affords too much knowledge to admit of being deluded by charms, by saintly relics, or by the incantations of the magician, we shall find, in forms adapted to the varied condition of society, quacks and nostrum-mongers, who with arts no less deceptive, and with impudence in no degree degenerated from that of their occult predecessors, proffering their nostrums and panaceas to the credulous, with assurances of results on disease, partaking little less of the marvelous and supernatural than those formerly claimed for charms and necromantic incantations.

With the view of demonstrating the evils which are imposed upon society by the quack and nostrum monger, it is deemed useful briefly to allude to some individual devices, by which such evils are disguised. Although it is an acknowledged detraction from the dignity of a philosophical discussion, to descend to a specific notice of objects so unworthy as the impostor; or to instance the arts by which his object is attained; yet it may be deemed a sufficient apology, that not only the interests, but the health and happiness of community, are more or less the penalty of afford-

ing encouragement to the nefarious arts which are the secret of his success. Presuming upon an innate propensity in mankind for novelty and mystery, these will be found an infallible accompaniment of the pretended discoveries of the empiric. But lest even this might fail to delude the less sanguine to proffer their pecuniary sacrifice at the shrine of the worthy discoverer, each nostrum, in addition to this, and the most unblushing assurance of its infallibility, is ushered forth with captivating mottoes, imposing appellatives, and a host of fictitious, purchased, or volunteered attestations* of their marvel workings in the

---

* It is to be regretted that these impositions of the quack should so frequently receive the patronage and attesting recommendations of men acknowledged as enlightened and scientific in their respective professions. Although this is in a degree chargeable upon individuals of the various professions, it is presumed more especially true as regards those of the clerical profession. This is evidenced from witnessing, more frequently, their names appended to the certificates and public announcements of the quack and nostrum-monger, and the fact, that some even venture upon an *indiscriminate* prescription of their nostrums! (A prescription is certainly *indiscriminate*, when proffered as a general curative agent for all diseases, like most nostrums, when prescribed by those ignorant of their composition.) This may well excite surprise, since it would appear that a more than ordinary jealousy of lay interference in the doctrinal tenets of theology is manifested

removal of diseases the most incurable. Notwithstanding, however, the variety of "*infallible*" agents for their cure, announced from generation to generation, these diseases still, with unabated voracity, prey upon life, and hurry, with undiminished speed, their victims to the tomb. Notwithstanding, too, the thousands of "*health restoratives*," "*purifiers of the*

---

in this profession. When, too, it is considered, that in most of our collegiate institutions, the rudiments of anatomy and physiology are taught as an accomplishment in general science, it might be expected that the very imperfect knowledge of these subjects there received, would rather intimidate than give confidence in an interference with a mechanism in which they have had exhibited but a view of its extreme delicacy and complication, without having been taught its most intimate relations, or the character of the agents which are adapted to its several parts, when in a state of derangement. It is not intended, however, here to stigmatize the clerical profession with a charge of sinister usurpation upon the province of the physician. On the contrary, it is gratifying to the author to express his conviction, that few of the more intelligent of that profession habitually indulge in the hazardous experiment of prescription. So far as the reverse is the fact, and the clergyman is prompted to assume the responsible office of the physician, it is presumable that such interchange of office is dictated by humane considerations, and those feelings that originate the distinguished benevolence which certainly characterize the profession, rather than with the object, ostentatiously, to display a superiority of knowledge and general scientific attainments.

blood," &c., that have appeared in this and all preceding ages, their deluded partakers, whose vitality has survived the ordeal, still linger invalids along the gloomy pathway of life; many, no doubt, eagerly waiting some new will o' the wisp, by which they are to be led deeper into the fen which it is their object to avoid.

Such captions as above specified, with numerous others equally significant, are plain and simple announcements of a mysterious agency, which the proffered medicament is adequate to effect. Others, with pretended effects no less mysterious, are ushered forth with a preceding mysticism, as implied in the question, "What is it we call the constitution?" with others of a similar import. These, although questions gravely propounded, are designed as a triumphant announcement, that the fortunate querist has developed the important mystery which the interrogatory involves, together with the wonderful remedy which is alone adequate for its preservation. Others are introduced to the notice of the public with the most expressive and significant appellatives of Greek derivation, as "*panacea*," or cure all; "*hygiene*," or health restoratives, &c.; or the less euphonious names of "*pain killer*," "*poor man's plaster*," &c. Others are not deemed unworthy of receiv-

ing the cognomen of the distinguished inventor himself, as "*Brandreth*," "*Morrison*," "*Moffatt's pills*," &c.; while, others, doubtless with the view to intimate the probability that they were revelations of Manitu or Hobomack, are announced with the names of "*Indian pills*," "*Brant's syrup*," &c. If such are boons, possessing but a small portion of the merit pretended, it must evidently be inferred that they were the revelation of some benevolent Indian deity; not, however, for the benefit of his friend, the red man, but for his oppressor, the "*pale face*." It is well known to those acquainted with Indian medical history, that chronic diseases, such as consumption, scrofula, &c., for the relief of which these Indian styled nostrums are announced, are entirely unknown to the wild tribes of that race. Consequently, neither a knowledge of these formidable diseases, nor the remedies for their removal, could have resulted from Indian experience; but must have been derived, either from his peculiar instinct, or from a supernatural communication from the Great Spirit whom the Indian adores.

As most of those mentioned are the more humble species of a genus under consideration, it may be deemed invidious to pass without notice the more extensive and equally pretending species, denominated steam or botanic

doctors. While most of the former have, with assumed modesty, been content with less comprehensive names, applied to their progeny only, such as vegetable pills, vegetable syrup, &c.: the last, with engrossing eagerness, have grasped whatever efficacy a distinguished name is capable of imparting, and personally assumed, as a cognomen, not only that of the vegetable kingdom, but likewise that additional, representing the most potent condition of the aqueous element.

It would seem that, in jealousy lest some other inquisitive suitor for the favors of these departments of nature, should extort a portion of their medicinal secrets, they have insured the monopoly of primogeniture, by the protection of a patent. As these, like their Indian titled brethren, make little pretensions to the dry acquisitions of science, nor even by lengthened experience to have explored the intimate character and relations of the departments whose names they have assumed, it may be presumed that, like them, their reliance for success with the public is upon the potent and popular magic of their name, aided by a belief, common with a portion of community, that inspiration, instinct, or necromancy, is most capable of imparting the mysteries of the animal economy; the nature of the diseases to which it is subject; and likewise of indicating

the particular agents by which health is to be preserved or restored. As claims thus dependent are obviously intangible, and too remote from the precincts of reason to allow its investigation, or even to be amenable to its decisions, its greater discretion will, evidently, be manifested in declining the discussion, and leave the merits of the system to be determined by the powers alluded to.

Lest these various attractive names, mottoes and mysticisms, should fail in procuring the desired attention for these hopeful progeny of quackery, we observe, not unfrequently, the startling caption appended to their announcements, "*Beware of counterfeits!*" designed, as all must perceive, to give importance to the wonderful bantling. This, so far as successful in beguiling the credulous, is indeed to be deplored. But when viewed in the light of the simple fact, is sufficiently ludicrous, as presenting the interesting spectacle, (hopeful indeed for the honest,) of an attempt of a knave to circumvent a knave in the division of the spoils of deception, and of an appeal to the anticipated victim to protect the base imposition.

But it is unnecessary to extend the catalogue, or further to weary the attention of the intelligent, by a notice of the contemptible arts practised by this class of impostors, with

a design to delude the ignorant, and those of easy faith. The grossest ignorance, or knavery, is the only category in which the entire species can claim rank. And it is to be regretted, that the public have not long since united to deprive quackery of the ability of preying upon their interests, by instituting a rational investigation of the frauds by which such impositions have been sustained. If a few of the thousands of nostrums palmed upon the public are, in some instances efficacious as simple laxatives or deobstruents, the merits of all are to be estimated from their degree of inertness; a character of which their inventors are specially mindful, from motives of economy as to the expense of the material used, if not of regard for the welfare of their deluded patients. They are all to be ranked among the arts devised to abstract money from the sufferers from disease, without the expected equivalent of amended health. Some of a more active character are destructive of health, and not unfrequently of life. Others, as remarked, may be attended with benefit, when they happen to be applied to diseases to which they are adapted. But the principal benefit derived from all, when such is the result, is more from the mental influence of faith and hope, imparted by the unreserved assurance of their inventors, and the studied mystery or secrecy

with which they are invested, rather than from the inherent qualities of their respective combinations. That faith and hope render essential aid to medication in diseases generally, by the healthful stimulus which they impart, is not to be questioned; and no judicious physician will fail to secure their assistance, to a degree sanctioned by his scientific knowledge of the results of disease, and his professional candor. But the empiric, possessing neither of these essential qualities, but with a cormorant's eye, directed alone to his individual interest, appeals to credulity and the instinctive love of life, to further its attainment. And while he aims to excite expectations in all cases, however desperate their natural character, with the view to attain this engrossing object, he is reckless of the sad realities which he is accumulating to burst upon his victim and friends; which are made poignant to a degree proportionate to the elevation of hope, inspired by his ignorance and knavery.

It is a fact, difficult of explanation, that individuals who in all cases exercise a sagacity and caution in their selection of skillful artisans for the structure or repair of their most ordinary mechanisms for domestic use, should make an exception to their customary rule when the vital fabric on which their health and life are dependent, is concerned. In this case, it is most surprising

that those should be discarded who possess a scientific knowledge of its structure and economy; and that confidence should be reposed in pretenders who are not only wanting, to a lamentable degree, in moral and mental endowments, but are totally devoid of a knowledge of the intricate mechanism from which they profess to remove embarrassment. It is probable, however, that a solution of the problem may be derived from the fact, that many persons contemplate the organic vital economy by the rules of judgment which they apply to ordinary mechanisms. Instead of viewing it as a whole, whose powers and capabilities are dependent upon an assemblage of its various parts, which differ from these only in its amazing complexity, they rather consider it as a species of mysterious unity, a knowledge of which is beyond the reach of the human intellect, and therefore is incapable of receiving aid from its exercise.

It is, doubtless, rather conceived by such, that its character can alone be developed by some unaccountable process, which, in its origin and nature, has little affinity to, or dependence on, ordinary mental perception; but which, notwithstanding, is adapted to develop the mystery of the vital mechanism, and the character of its derangements. With those who arrive at conclusions so irrational,

relative to the animal economy, it is not surprising that notions the most absurd should exist, regarding the agents by which its disordered condition is to be effectually counteracted, or even its healthy actions sustained.

If those who entertain such vague and undefined notions of the animal economy, would but exercise that degree of reason which they apply in their judgments of the nature and properties of ordinary mechanism, and avail themselves of means within the power of all for a due estimate of its character, they would learn that its results, like most of these, proceed from a complicated assemblage of internal organs, holding marked relations, each being essential to the specific identity of the general systematic action, and all being alike dependent for healthy operation upon the law, in accordance with which its structure was modeled. They would likewise learn that this, in consequence of superiority of mechanism, is infinitely more subject to dangerous embarrassments from the hands of those ignorant of its structure, than is the most complicated artificial machinery from the interference of those ignorant of its several parts, and the laws and principles upon which its actions are made dependent. In short, they would, without hesitation, repudiate the pre-

tender to marvel-working upon the disordered animal fabric, when such person was unable to exhibit satisfactory evidence that he was versed in the science of its structure.

SECTION VII.

Homœopathy.

"CREDO QUIA IMPOSSIBILE."*

Most of the antagonist influences which the science of medicine has encountered in its progress, consist in the petty and contemptible devices of the ignorant quack and nostrum-monger. These generally consist of but one, or at most a few pretended specifics, which are announced as applicable to all diseases, however diverse may be their character, or the degree of activity which they exhibit.

The authors of these inventions, (to promote their selfish and ambitious designs, holding no pretensions to science, and generally wanting the requisite genius or industry to construct complicated systems,) confidently trust their success upon experiments for the diversion of popular reason, and their alluring appeals to the existing passion for novelty and mystery; an agency which their instinctive sagacity gives assurance is paramount to

---

* "I believe it, for the reason that it is impossible."—*Ancient satirical paradox.*

all others for the accomplishment of their unhallowed object.

Occasionally, however, opposing systems, the inventions of authors more talented, and of loftier ambition, have originated from the labratory of empiricism, such as the atomic theory of Epicurus, the chemical theory of Paracelsus,* that embracing the astral influ-

---

* Paracelsus, who may be considered the father of the chemical theory, flourished at the commencement of the sixteenth century, when the science of chemistry was in its infancy, and when its almost magical phenomena excited the most extravagant hopes in its results. He possessed undoubted superiority of talent, and, considering the period in which he lived, was eminent for his scientific attainments. Like Hahnemann, he announced himself to the world as a medical reformer, with a boldness, assurance, and self-complacency, which render him a worthy prototype of the modern adventurer for the same distinction. Were a modern biographer of the pretended reformers of science, morals, and religion, to adopt the mode of Plutarch, by instituting a comparison between his several subjects, this distinguished empiric is the one, of all others, in whom he might find a striking parallel to the author of homœopathy; as, in self-conceit, boldness, visionary theorizing, and affected contempt of authority and experience, it would be difficult to discover a "*par nobile fratrum*" possessing a greater assimilation of character and mental qualities.

Paracelsus promulgated the theory, that all changes of organic structure, constituting disease, as well as those inducing senility, were the effects of a deranging preponderance, of either the acid or alkaline constitu-

ences, termed astrology, &c., each of which, for a period, became a formidable rival to medi-

---

ents of the organs; and in both cases, were susceptible of counteraction, by appropriate neutralizing antagonists, or by additional supplies to the deficient element. His doctrines, therefore, will be perceived as wholly based on chemistry; and so infatuated did he become in their advocacy, that he proclaimed an era, as not only having dawned, but had actually become resplendent, through the light of his genius, when assaults upon the citadel of life, whether by disease or age, were rendered imbecile when defended by his *chemical potences*.

He proclaimed all antecedent medical science and experience but a tissue of errors, in which the human mind had ever groped, until dissipated by his wonderful discoveries. Such was his dogmatic zeal, that he caused a collection of the writings of Hippocrates, Celsus, Galen, and all preceding works on medicine, and formally committed them to the flames, before his admiring class of pupils, while seated in pomp in his professorial chair at the institution of Padua, in which he was a lecturer and teacher.

In arrogant conceit of his own self-importance, in a pretended ability for effecting revolutionary results, in denunciations of the labors of his predecessors,—indeed, in all respects, except that of asserting a claim to the power of resisting the encroachments of age, the German is in no degree inferior in pretensions to his Paduan parallel. The latter compounded an elixir vitæ, or immortalizing catholicon, which he ever bore about his person, to meet the emergency of a vital assault, and ever proclaimed his own material immortality, as well as that of all others, possessing a faith in its re-invigorating influence.

It is not improbable that Paracelsus, living at the

cal science. But with the subsidence of their novelties, and by the influence of a science based upon reason, these visionary fabrications, each in succession, yielded its pre-eminence to some other, constructed on a semblance more nearly representing the existing state of the sciences, and more accordant with the varied condition of popular taste and sentiment.

---

period of the dawn of chemical science, might have entertained honest expectations, that its agents would effect a new era in the science of medicine; and, perhaps, accomplish many of the wonders which he announced. Whatever may have been the motives by which he was actuated however, he now appears in the dilemma of having been a downright knave, or an infatuated monomaniac. Unfortunately for his hopes of a perpetuated material existence, he died in a state of intoxication, at about the age of forty, with his vitalizing elixir in his pocket. He was equally unlucky in securing for himself posthumous fame as a public benefactor, as his superior intellect, in connection with his lofty pretensions, served only to stigmatize his memory with the derogatory title of prince of quacks.

There is little doubt that the

"Longing after immortality,"

or

"The secret dread and inward horror
Of falling into naught,"

have prompted most of the boasted reformers in medicine, as well as in morals and religion, to their strenuous efforts; although the alternative in prospect may alone have been a like unpropitious and infamous remembrance.

The latest, and the existing theory of this description, is that denominated homœopathy, the invention of an ultra conceited German, of some talent and some pretensions to science, named Hahnemann.* The assumed principles of this theory are equally novel with those enumerated, and opposed to all observation and experience of the lights of medical science, for the past three thousand years. This system is based on pretensions which, (if true,) demolish the conclusions of all previous investigators of the agents employed for the removal of diseases; and it must be ad-

---

* The entire of the writings of this visionary is but a tissue of conceitedness, uniformly egotistical, and self-laudatory of his own sagacity, as manifested in his wonderful discovery. The title of his work called "Organon," was adopted, no doubt, from a conceit of the intellectual resemblance of the author with the immortal Bacon, whose work, on the inductive method of reasoning, is styled "Novum Organum."

The following affords but a small specimen from that work of his self-laudatory and self-complacent method of writing: "I am the first who pursued this path with perseverance that could alone result from, and be supported by the intimate conviction of this great truth, so valuable to the human race, that the homœopathic administration of medicines is the sole method of curing disease."—*Organon, page* 137.

"It is *impossible* that there should be any other true method of curing *dynamic diseases*, besides homœopathy."—*Ibid.*

mitted, that the hitherto universally received notions of the proportionate relations which the power of causes hold with their effects, in mechanical philosophy, require essential modification, on the acknowledgement of the claims of this strange, not to say preposterous theory.

That such a claim should be preferred, for a reversal of belief in established opinions and principles, may well excite derision, when it is understood that its validity consists, not in the tested developments of time and extended observation of facts, accumulated by a mass of talent and intelligence, but mostly on the closet lucubrations of the inventor, Hahnemann, tested by the assumed experience of his disciples, who, in aggregate of talent, are far from holding a rank equal with the medium standard of medical reputation.

In addressing the intelligent, it cannot be necessary to adduce evidence to prove, that every branch of science has attained its present comparative state of perfection, through the associated labors of intellect in all preceding ages: nor that medicine, one of the most complicated of the sciences, involving all the abstruse problems of the animal economy, instead of being an exception, presents a field requiring a greater succession of intellectual effort for its successful cultivation,

than any other branch of learning. If, therefore, it has failed to acquire the exactness to which other sciences have attained, it is to be imputed to the yet insufficient period which has elapsed since its origin, adequately to define the complicated principles upon which it is based, rather than to the want of talent and assiduity with which it has been cultivated.

No individual, versed in the science of human nature, would for a moment give heed to pretensions, that the existing degree of civilization, which has resulted from a progessive process through ages, could be developed in barbarous communities within the short period of a few months, or even years, by the teachings of one or a few individuals. Nor would such admit, that the wonderful inventions in the arts, as the steam engine, &c., instead of resulting from a happy application of principles which were the product of the combined intellect of various ages, were the sole and independent offspring of the individual genius of their authors. Yet such conclusions, in regard to civilization and the arts, would be no more irrational, than the belief that a system, like that of medicine, could originate and be perfected by the labors of an individual, however great his genius, which should be more perfect, and more worthy of confidence,

than that based upon the experience and intellectual contributions of men the most distinguished for talent, and deeply skilled in the science of the animal economy, during the period of more than thirty centuries.

Such, it will be understood, are the claims of homœopathy, which is known to be founded solely on the speculations of its inventor and a few recent followers, who, as has been noticed, generally hold a minor rank in the profession to which they claim to belong.

The above view of facts, in connection with the important consideration, that the principles upon which medical science is founded, have not only been sustained, but essentially strengthened by the sanction of men of the highest standing for literary acquirements and talent in every era of its history, and having at the present period obtained the assent of nearly all its enlightened and unbiased professors in every country, warrant the highly important suggestion to all who are not intimately versed in the science of the animal economy, (previous to yielding their faith to such novel pretensions as that of homœopathy,) to institute a scientific examination of the time-tested system, which it aims to supplant; and this, with the view of estimating the merits of both, from a rational comparison of their respective claims.

It is presumed, that honest convictions influence the non-professional converts to the doctrines of homœopathy, to repose confidence and life upon that most inefficient of all empirical systems that has ever yet pretended to contribute to a restoration of health, from a state of disease. But, if a like charitable vindication is extended to its professional advocates, who profess an acquaintance with medical science, it must alone consist in that unenviable mantle, the "*one idea*," which is frequently adduced to protect the social and religious fanatic from the charge of selfish ambition and direct imposture.

It is not here designed minutely to discuss the claims which the established science of medicine, and homœopathy, respectively proffer for public consideration. But that the candid searcher after truth may be supplied with data on which to base his conclusions, allusion will briefly be made to some of the prominent facts and principles which characterize each, that, by a comparative view, the judgment may more readily decide on their respective merits

The most extended experience of all the most distinguished cultivators of medical science, has proved that the effects of medicinal

substances on the human system hold a relation to the quantity applied; and that such effects are modified, in various degrees, proportionate to such quantities, from their action as a destructive poison, to their termination in almost infinitely minute effects; or their entire inefficiency, from minuteness of quantity, to act upon the vital organism.

Medicines, when applied to the structure of the economy, form no exception to the physical law, that active forces, or causes, are required to bear a relation to the amount of force to be acted upon; or, in short, the cause is required to be adapted to the effect expected to be produced. Thus, if in the human system diseased action exists, the counteracting effects of the medicine given for its removal, is required to be of sufficient force to overcome, or control it; and the quantity administered is to be graduated in relation to the force of the diseased action. Or if the entire vital action is designed to be suppressed, largely increased quantities of the same, constituting a medicinal poison, is required for its accomplishment.

Every tyro in natural philosophy possesses the knowledge, that quantities of the explosives, such as gunpowder, which would be adequate, when placed in suitable situations, to demolish the largest buildings, or to disinte-

grate the largest rocks, may, by extreme division, have its power so modified, as to manifest effects scarcely appreciable upon masses of far less magnitude than those instanced.

Indeed, it may be assumed as an incontrovertible position, that all material agents, whether organized or inorganic, when required to act upon other matter, will fail in their desired operation, unless, by their molecular combination, a power is generated proportionate to the effects sought to be produced; or, in other words, to the bulk of matter to be affected by its force. Thus the life of the infant is destroyed by a quantity of opium, or other poisons, which the adult might take with impunity. When given for remedial purposes, all medicines produce results in a ratio corresponding with the quantities given and the age of the recipient, subject however to the occasional exception of modification by peculiar idiosyncrasy. Combination of kernels of gunpowder will impel the cannon ball through the hull of the distant ship, while the individual grain is incapable of commencing its action. And in no instance whatever, except in the brain of the arrant visionary, can a different perception of the laws to which matter is subjected, be entertained or countenanced.

Now, in application of the foregoing reasoning to medical science, it may be stated, that the most lengthened experience has determined, that diseases are agencies acting in contravention to healthy systematic action, and generally, if uncontroled by remedies, or the sanatary efforts of the economy, terminate in the dissolution, or serious detriment of the fabric invaded. The same lengthened experience has determined, that certain medicinal agents, administered in quantities suitable for the existing emergency, possess the ability, often to overcome such deranged action, and to effect a return to a state of health, by the counteraction and expulsion of the causes by which it has been interrupted.

For the purpose of rendering aid to common-sense conclusions, at which it is important that all, whether professional or non-professional, should arrive on this subject, a few facts will briefly be adduced, which are deemed incontrovertible, as they have been established by the general assent of all rational physicians in every age and country.

A large proportion of diseases have ever been acknowledged as originating from derangement of the organs of digestion,* in

* The secondary cause of most diseases is derived by Hahnemann, from itch or siphilis, which has been

consequence of the irritation of their immediate contents. In such cases their removal is desirable, and is often speedily effected by emetics, of which tartarized antimony is one of the most important. This, given in doses of from three to six grains, or in less quantities, in combination with other emetic substances, in proper proportions of each, (as is usually practised,) often speedily removes the irritating contents of the stomach, and with them the general diseased action. The same medicine, when exhibited in much diminished doses, as from the one eighth to the sixteenth or twentieth of a grain, varied of

---

repelled into the system, by allœopathic treatment; the primary cause of these diseases being mental. However skeptical may be allœopathic physicians, as to his reasonings regarding the mental origin of the former disease, doubtless all will yield their assent as regards the latter. With such view of diseases, it is not surprising that sulphur and mercury in "*potences*" (Hahnemann) of a millionth, or trillionth of a grain, should rank among his most favorite remedies. It must be presumed that Hahnemann's reasonings regarding his theory of the mental origin of diseases, have been satisfactory and convincing to all his followers; as, otherwise, it would be evincing a want of respect to their intellects to suppose, that they could bestow a faith upon his molecular or atomic doses; which, like mathematical points, are rather objects of mental conception, than an existence susceptible of demonstration by any evidence derived from impressions made on the senses.

course by age and peculiarity of constitution, without producing emetic action, has been determined, by the same general experience, to be one of the most valuable remedies in febrile diseases, by its action on the skin and lungs, producing perspiration and expectoration, effects most salutary in this class of affections. If the quantity given is so graduated as to produce slight nausea, without emetic effects, its efficacy, in general, is more manifest. Given in quantities much diminished from those mentioned, its effects are inappreciable to the senses either of the patient or physician. Calomel, in doses of from five to fifteen grains, is a valuable cathartic; and when the quantity is diminished to one half, or one fourth of one grain, is an alterative or deobstruent. But in quantities much lessened, these effects disappear, and the system manifests no recognizance of its presence within it. Many of the spasmodic affections yield to large exhibitions of opium, as from two to several grains, while the ordinary dose of one grain rarely is capable of controling them. In ordinary instances, one grain will generally produce quiescence, or sleep, in adults; but essentially diminished from this quantity, its sensible effects will be slight, or in no degree noticeable. It is unnecessary further to particularize substances employed

as remedies, but it may be generally stated, that all remedial agents act upon the system with like proportionate effects to the quantities administered. If essential deviations from the effects stated, occasionally occur in individual instances, such are but rare deviations from a general law, and but prove the exceptions which may arise from individual idiosyncrasies, repulsive of the action of particular remedial agents.

In this connection will be noticed the pretensions of the homœopathic theory, which assigns to all diseases a primary origin in the mind, and which is assumed as proved and substantiated by the speculations and experience of Hahnemann, and a limited number of his disciples.*

---

* It has been stated, in a previous note, that the chemical theory of Paracelsus was based upon the assumption, that the causes of diseased action consisted in the predominance of an acid or an alkali; and that to effect their removal, simple neutralizing re-agents were required. The theory of Hahnemann rests on the position, announced with equal dogmatic assurance, that all diseases are of primary mental origin; consequently, reasoning *a priori* upon such imputed cause, with the object of investigating curative agencies for disease thus generated, must inevitably have led the distinguished discoverer to his celebrated maxim, *similia similibus curantur;* or, literally, that remedies, to prove efficacious on a cause thus subtle, must possess a similar refined character to that of the agency to be effected. This

It is designed, by this method, to facilitate rational conclusions, by means of a ready com-

---

mode of reasoning must necessarily have taught him that such cause (in the lucid language of the author of Organon) "cannot otherwise be assailed and effected than in a (*denamic*) *spiritual manner;* neither can such morbid disturbances, or, in other words, such diseases, be removed by the physician, *except, in like manner, by means of the spiritual (dinamic visual) countervailing agency of suitable medicines, acting on the same vital principle.*"—*Organon, page* 85.

Many metaphysicians have reasoned that the mind is a sort of monad, possessing neither parts nor extension; a kind of mathematical point, existing without actual existence; in fact, an entity, intangible, unextensible, undefinable, yet acting, active, effective, and susceptible of being affected. On the presumption that the author of homœopathy belonged to this class of psychological sages, the beauty and magnitude of his discovery, that "like cures like," must be apparent. For the mind wants the power of conceiving of an agency more subtle, and of a character more accordant with, and like its own nature, as above defined, than that exhibited in a homœopathic decillionth or sextillionth part of an ordinary alleœopathic dose of chemically concentrated, or other drugs. In view of such *magnitude of minuteness,* it is not surprising that Hahnemann's exponent, the imaginative Jocelin, should, in rapturous admiration of the wisdom of his German master, have written that "one man, by Hahnemann's process, can, in a single day, effect a greater comminution of a substance than could have been effected in a direct mixture by the combined labor of the whole human race, continually operating since the creation of Adam. The labor that built the pyramids is nothing in comparison to that of even the *eighteenth potence* by such a process; that is, by thoroughly triturating one grain with a sextillionth of a grain!"

parison of this theory with the principles and laws hitherto announced as predominant in all departments of nature, whether vital or inorganic, and which, as stated, have been confirmed by rational investigation in all periods in which science has been cultivated.

Instead of deductions, heretofore recognized, regarding the efficient quantities and definite operation of remedial agents, the homœopath has substituted the theory, that the "infinitesimal" diminution of the ordinary quantities, exerts a power antagonistic to disease, which, far more surely, interrupts disordered action, and more speedily restores organism to its natural healthy condition.

Thus, in the case of the tartarized antimony, instanced above, in lieu of its least diaphoretic, or perspirative dose, which the most extended experience has decided suitable and adequate for such effects, the dilution and exhibition of such quantity (viz., the 1-3th or 1-20th grain) in millionth or even trillionth parts, is announced by homœopathy, as possessing a *potency* in controling diseased action, which advances in a ratio proportionate to the diminution of the quantity administered, or at least in degrees presenting similar relations. Opium, which has been noticed as requiring exhibition in largely increased doses in some spasmodic

diseases to reduce their action, by the homœopathic theory, undergoes equal division and attenuation with antimony, in which state its powers are claimed as appearing in their greatest development.

As a particularity of detail would be but a repetition of the same principle of exhibition, applied to the various remedies employed in homœopathic prescription, it is deemed sufficient to state, that quinine, ipecacuanha, aconite, cicuta, and indeed their entire catalogue of medicines, are administered in the same form of *infinitesimal* reduction of doses, as those of antimony, calomel, and opium.*

In considering the preceding illustrations, derived from the physical laws, the Homœopath will most probably object, that such are not applicable to the animal economy; as this is subject to the influence of a vital force,

---

* A globule of sugar, impregnated with the juice of aconite, of the decillionth degree of dilution, cures the most violent pleuritic fever in twenty-four hours at furtherest.—*Organon, page* 16, *note.*

It is taught by Hahnemann, "that the homœopathic medicinal agent, selected by a skillful physician, will convert it (the disease,) into another medicinal disease, which is analogous, but rather more intense," "and this in turn is easily subdued by the vital powers, leaving, in its primitive state of integrity and health, the essence or substance which animates and preserves the body."—*See Organon, page* 90.

which furnishes the law of its action. In reply to such objection, it may be stated, that it is not a fact that vitality is a power independent of the laws governing ordinary matter; it only holds an agency in the economy, which, during its existence, so modifies its action as to render aid in effecting the specific changes which characterize the peculiar combinations of matter, constituting a living fabric, in contradistinction to its ordinary aggregation.

Thus gravity is not in any degree suspended in its action on the general vitalized compound. The heart circulates the blood on principles strictly mechanical, deriving from vitality only its structural abilities, and a stimulus inciting its contractile and impulsive capabilities. It requires for its exertion of normal healthy action, an amount of stimulus equal to that supplied by the entire volume of the blood; and as in many diseases this stimulus is defective, it is reasonable to presume that the artificial supply must be supplied from sources more abounding in power than the the atomic "*potences*" of homœopathy.

The stomach, liver, &c., furnish fluids charged with suitable chemical agents, to effect digestion of the food, and its preparation for systemic nutriment. Indeed, the functions generally are made dependent upon the ordin-

ary laws of matter, subject to a degree of modification by the vital influence.

The invisible and hidden function of organic nutrition, there is every reason to suppose, is effected through the medium of the chemical agents contained in the blood, causing deposition of new material in parts requiring such, and a simultaneous detachment of the effete and deleterious debris of the organs; and by the same active affinities, aided by an endosmosis, (a kind of capillary attraction,) their expulsion from the system is accomplished. Disease, which in most cases is a disordered state of nutrition, consists of, or is doubtless attended with, an increase or diminution of the chemical stimuli which ordinarily abound in the blood.

Chemistry conclusively shows, that the animal fabric is composed of a variety of elementary constituents, many of which, as carbon, soda, potass, lime, sulphur, phosphorus, iron, &c., furnish homœopathy with its most efficient remedies. It is probable that the quantities of these various elements of the system, existing in the fluids and solids of every adult, which substances, as medicines, are exhibited by the homœopath in infinitesimal doses, as his most active remedies, would furnish to any honest prescriber, on the strict principles of Hahnemann, more than would

suffice for active prescription, the entire period of the longest professional life, if not of several lives.

An illustration still more demonstrative of homœopathic irrationality, may be derived from the phenomena of diseases manifested during their progress, and often at the period of their origin. Facts of the most obvious character show, that in many formidable diseases, the healthy balance of the elements composing the organic fabric becomes deranged, presenting a deficiency or preponderancy of some of these, furnishing often the most prominent agency of derangement. Thus, in calcular affections, the natural acids, or alkalies, acquire such ascendency as to exhibit the most marked features of the disease. In rickets, a deficiency of limy compounds is proved by the defective supply of that substance for the solidification of the bones. Scurvy presents a putrescent and alkaline condition of the fluids and solids of the system, requiring, with improved diet and tonics, a large supply of acids to correct this altered condition of the healthy organic compounds.

These diseases, as well as gout, rheumatism, and some others, exhibit indubitable evidence that great derangement in the equilibrium of the constituent elements of the system often exists; and whether this constitutes

a primary or secondary agent of disease, it certainly affords an indication of chief importance in their treatment, that remedies, in adaptation of quantities as well as kinds, should be applied with the view to restore the elementary inequality.

In such condition of disease, a rational selection of remedies would be such as had reference to a restoration of the healthy equilibrium that had been interrupted, by furnishing such substances, as remedies, which were of a nature to supply the deficient, or to neutralize the preponderating element, and thereby aid in a restoration of the normal healthy standard. But, by homœopathic theorizing, such obvious state of disease is to be combatted, not by the exhibition of acids, alkalies, tonics, &c., in the rational quantity of a compensating supply of the deficient elements, as neutralizing agents of those superabounding, but rather by a charm in the name of "*millionth*" or "*decillionth dilutions*" of such remedies, by which the elementary discords are to be removed, and the unnatural strife hushed to an immediate healthy repose. But it is not only preposterous, but the extreme of folly, seriously to pretend that the deranged relations of these abounding systemic elements can be restored to their healthy proportions by the baseless nothings which is the literal interpretation of all homœopathic prescription.

Chemical analysis shows conclusively, that many substances employed as nutrients contain some of the most active medicinal poisons, which the homœopath affects to administer but in doses of a *millionth* or *decillionth dilution* of an ordinary allœopathic quantity, but which are often taken daily, as food or condiments, in great comparative concentration. Of these are, prussic acid, in the peach, almond, &c.; opium, oxalic acid, &c., in lettuce, sorrel, and a variety of sallads.

Even the atmosphere which we inspire, ever contains carbonic acid, an active compound of carbon, estimated at from one hundredth to one thousandth parts of its volume. Occasionally many other of the most energetic substances are diffused in the air in a gaseous form, and in frequent instances are momentarily introduced within the system in considerable quantities. Indeed, were all the active substances thus daily taken into the economy by the invisible natural processes, but prescribed by the alleœopathic physician, in view of the Hahnemannic lights, there is little question that (from a prescient view of the disastrous result) a homicide, "*secundum artem*," would not fail to be announced.*

* In view of such manifest dangers, which a necessary science unfolds to him, the intelligent homœopath is

This recent novelty founds its claims, not on the pretended discovery of new physiological principles, or new remedial agents for the cure of disease, but on the employment of such as have long been known and thoroughly investigated by physicians. It is true that Hahnemann, its originator, has announced the novel theory, that all diseases owe their primary origin to the mind; and he is entitled to the credit of the discovery, that a knowledge of the anatom-

---

certainly an object requiring the commisseration of all the humane; since Providence has immersed him in perils, (which his science can but unfold,) by imposing upon him necessities, both in his structure and position, the indulgence of which is perpetually saturating his system with formidable poisons in allœopathic quantities. In such condition, with the knowledge that the effects of a single dose of a *millionth* or a *trillionth* portion of a grain, (as taught by Hahnemann,) continues its effects during a period of from four to six days, either for safety or danger, the exceeding frail tenor on which he holds existence must ever be fearfully before him, and even its hourly continuance must appear a perpetual marvel and demonstrative miracle. In addition, it may be presumed that his humane sympathies for the brute creation would be hopelessly annoying to his mental quiet, as he ought to view them as furnished with provisionary instincts, directing them, when diseased, to appropriate remedies, which they are compelled to receive allœopathically, for the want of the means of homœopathic manipulation; as nature has furnished no remedies of sufficient dilution in which their highest curative "*potences*" can be attained.

ical structure of the system is without utility to the physician; as he teaches that a perception of the locality of disease, or of the particular organ affected, renders no aid, nor is this to be taken into consideration in the applications for its cure. Divested of such absurd notions, and the most wild and visionary theorizing on the nature of disease, announced in a train of equally absurd reasoning and a new verbal coinage, probably as little comprehended by the writer as his readers, the tangible novelty of homœopathy consists in the simple but strange announcement, that remedial agents are salutary and efficacious for the cure of disease, only, when exhibited in quantities so infinitely minute, that no reflective or rational mind, versed in the character of the animal economy, or the agency of causes by which it is affected, can for a moment admit their efficacy, either upon the system of the patient or his disease, in the least degree, except what may be derived through the credulous faith of those inviting its exhibition. In fact, no such investigation can result in any other conclusion, than that homœopathic prescription acts merely as a mental anodyne during the period that the conservative powers with which the organic economy is endowed, by their unaided efforts, either expel the morbid agents, thereby restoring healthy action to the organs, or, if

less successful in their attempts, yield them to their destructive influence.

Such is the remedial power with which organization is endowed, that, by its unaided efforts, morbid agencies are often successfully counteracted, and many grave diseases removed, not unfrequently when its power is embarrassed by the noxious administration of the quack, or the injudicious employment of his nostrums. It is, therefore, little surprising that the Homœopathic pretender, aided in his assumptions by this conservator of the economy, should not want his purloined occasions to boast of recoveries from disease subsequent to his prescriptions; notwithstanding similar claims might, with far greater justice, be preferred by every matronly village dispenser of mullen, catnip, and her various anti-drug formulas; or, by the prescriber of relics and charms to the nervously affected invalid, requiring such appropriate mental stimulus as a credulous faith is often capable of imparting.

The above remarks are, beyond question, true as regards prescription in accordance with the ostensible tenets of Homœopathy. But it is highly probable that most of its professional advocates have embraced its doctrines, with the view to make its novelties available to secure public patronage, and thereby enhance their interests, rather than from the convic-

tion of the real value of the claims which it proffers.

From such presumption may be derived a hope, that the sum of evil accruing to society from the omissions of Homœopathy to supply efficacious treatment to imminent disease may, in a considerable degree, be diminished in the apparent amount, which an ordinary estimate of the judgment would be likely to give. A courteous charity must suggest that such accommodating professors, when prescribing for grave diseases requiring energetic prescription, would make such *judicious* appropriation of the resources of the two opposite systems as the emergency might require, although their *consistency*, as well as *expediency*, should dictate that allœopathic quantities be denominated Homœopathic, when exhibited before confiding spectators of their acts.

All empirical nostrums and systems, that have ever been announced, have had the accompaniment of an assumed evidence of their superiority over the established system, which it was the aim of their projectors to supercede. Indeed, the sagacity of the inventors would be justly impeached, were their systems presented to a common sense public, without such indispensible requisite for the attainment of their premeditated designs. As the ambition for popular eclat, however transient or unmerited, and an

engrossing self-interest, are the impelling motives which influence the empirical pretender to construct his inventions, a common estimate of his intellect would naturally excite the expectation, that his fabric would be woven in conformity with that propensity of the mind, hertofore alluded to, upon which he must be presumed to be aware his success alone depends; and that it should be fortified by an ostensible armature of assumed facts, sufficient to subdue the natural skepticism of the mind, and delude to a surrender of its belief in the novelty presented.

In such adaptations of its texture, and the necessary display of assumptions and pretended facts requisite to ensure a temporary success, the Hahnemanic theory is not defective, or unworthy of a comparison with its defunct predecessors. Nor will it appear that its author is undeserving a reputation for sagacity, and an intimate knowledge of ordinary human nature. For, while he has indulged a propensity for the novel and the marvelous, he has entrenched himself within a cloud of subtleties and mysticisms, more profoundly obscured by his reasonings and new-coined technicality. Whether true, therefore, or false, it may perhaps ever remain a perplexing paradox to ordinary reason and the senses, for the cause, that the objects and facts pretended to be embraced are too intangible, and too far beyond their pre-

cincts, to be made the subjects of their investigation.

Such is the texture and adaptations of the Homœopathic novelty, which evidently has been moulded in a conformity with the credulity of the existing period of advancement in the sciences. A period when such gross systems as astrology and its kindred species, which were adapted to the false sciences of the middle ages, could in no degree be countenanced, even by the most ignorant. Yet, singular as it may appear, this theory is not wanting presumed disinterested advocates, possessing intelligence and science, who have been captivated by its plausible novelties, so far as to yield it their support. This *phenomenon* must be explained on the supposition that these, by over-rigid speculations on the acknowledged imperfections of reason, have adjudged its entire fallibility; and are therefore ready to embrace, as a substitution, the figments of its rival, imagination. Or that, from a knowledge of the imperfections of legitimate medical science, they are inclined to discard the entire system for the embrace of such novelties as may be rendered specious by a given number of assumed facts, although these, they may be compelled to receive, mainly, on the authority of their promulgators alone; or perhaps, in some instances, the theory may

have been adopted through the influence of a preponderating tendency of the mind to a ready faith in the marvelous and obscure, by which its decisions have been biased, while under excitement from the novelties presented, rather than by a dispassionate examination which the importance of the subject undoubtedly demands.

Homœopathy, however, may not be unworthy of a consideration in estimating degrees of negative merit, when contrasted with the over-drugging quack and the mercenary nostrum-monger. For while the latter, through eagerness for gain, often destroys health and life by encouraging quantitive exhibition of their specifics, the infinitesimal doses of the former, though contributing no aid to the sanative power of nature, certainly is not chargeable with interposing the least degree of embarrassment to its conservative operations.

From the exposition of the tenets of homœpathy which has been given it will appear, that their reception as legitimate science, not only involves the discussion, that the essential principles on which all past and existing medical prescription is founded are erroneous and false, but that the rational deduction in natural philosophy, that causes hold a corresponding relation to the effects which they

originate, is a position alike fallacious and untenable, which is an assumption too preposterous to need the attempt to refute.

It is to be feared, that the easy faith of converts to this theory has been biased by the probabilities which have been realized by the extraordinary inventions in the arts, in modern periods, rather than by sober philosophical investigation of the relations that such bear to the principles discovered by preceding cultivators of science. It will, however, appear manifest to all familiar with the scientific history of the principles upon which such inventions are dependent, that their authors, though entitled to distinguished consideration for their discoveries, have been able to acquire their reputation by so availing themselves of the labors of their predecessors, as, by a happy application and combination of previous discoveries, to accomplish the great results that emanate from their genius.

If these individual inventions in the arts are generally but completing combinations of structures, by their fortunate discoverers, that have long been in progress by the efforts of a succession of laborers in the field of the physical sciences, much less can it be expected that a complicated system, like that of medicine, based on the vital laws and embracing the entire range of the natural sciences, should be

developed and perfected by any individual, however intellectually endowed. But far less can it be rationally hoped to be accomplished by such adventurous speculatists as have universally been the authors of its innovating rival theories.

No one questions but that medical science is yet susceptible of the greatest improvements. But it is the extreme of folly to entertain a notion of the probability, that this time-confirmed system is to be demolished by the infantile genius of homœopathy, and that its own fabric is destined to be erected on its ruins.*

---

* Since this section was in press, the author has met with an epistolary essay, addressed to the public, which is admirably illustrative of the data on which homœopathy relies for its success. Of the writer's scientific character, moral orthodoxy, or standing with the fraternity to which he has attached himself, farther than his portraiture in his epistle shows, the author is wholly ignorant; but (as is common in similar cases) he announces that he has passed the tedious ordeal of allœopathy. It is to be understood that the former is *of course* proved; and his conversion to homœopathy, upon the presentation of *certain important facts*, *may be* received as evidence of his *honesty* and extreme *conscienciousness*. Throughout the pages of this document, the interesting *canines* appear beautifully protrusive and prominent. Skeptics also, (unless hopelessly willful,) *may* obtain light, as in addition to the opportunities afforded in said circular, the writer, in furtherance of his object of promoting true science and the public welfare, has *candidly*

If such idea may be entertained, that a recent novel invention, like this, with but

---

and *beneficently* given information that his *office is at the corner of Water and Wall.*

Besides a liberal diffusion of the trite empirical boasts of wonder-workings by homœopathy, the usual amount of lugubrious wailings regarding allœopathic persecution, (the infallible resort of quackery, with the view to invoke the aid of public sympathy,) and the wanton profanation of the names of the immortal Gallileo, Harvey and Fulton, by presuming to assimilate their discoveries with the Hahnemanic humbug, the writer has well succeeded in rendering "darkness visible" by an attempt to demonstrate his art by a reference to malaria, contagion, electricity, and others, their congenial imponderables. So far he has safely indulged in flippant speculation and imaginary deduction in proof of homœopathy, without essential hazard to his reputation for sagacity and medical learning, for the reason, that such is the general ignorance regarding the nature of these subtle and indefinable elements, that visionary assertion and criticism hold a like unsubstantial basis. It may be stated here, that no honest rational individual, conversant with the visible operations of such agencies as electricity, galvanism, caloric, and gravitation, will attempt to establish an analogy between their manifest forces and that of an atom, or monad of gross matter, such as is pretended to be detached by Hahnemanic attenuation, and exhibited, a solitary wanderer, in its relatively deep profound, a drop of distilled water, or imprissoned within the granular pastry sphere, after its arrest by the ingenious device of the *infinitesimal* manipulator.

The forces above named (for aught we know) may be identical; and, like fluids generally, when their equilibrium is interrupted, may act with an energy derived from the entire mass with which the disturbed portion

the most limited amount of evidence adduced in its support, presents the probability that it is

---

is connected. These, however, are expedient subterfuges for the support of a baseless fabric, like that of homœopathy, and its advocates have not failed to retreat within their obscure precincts for refuge, when pursued by the overwhelming demonstrations of reason, and the equally forcible proofs derived from the senses. Unfortunately for himself, however, the writer, in his zeal to popularize his art, has ventured upon the more definite and comprehensible domain of pathology, for a demonstration of his favorite infinitesimals. This being so manifestly designed for *sensible* effect on the class of sufferers from the affection instanced, is worthy of a passing notice, lest the beauty of the artfully adjusted pelt should divert attention from the elongated ears concealed beneath. Thus it reads: "While the system is in an abnormal condition, it is more susceptible of impressions or influences than when in a normal or healthy state. A blow, for instance, which would inflict very little pain on a healthy body, would have caused great agony had it fallen on an inflamed part." Ergo: "From what has been stated, it will be perceived by the unprejudiced mind, that minute doses of homœopathic, or *specific* remedies, may possess the power of effecting a mighty revolution in a diseased organic structure or tissue, while no change is wrought upon the normal or healthy portion of the system. Experience, our best teacher, most faithfully sustains us in this conclusion."

Impressed with such a *sensible* and *feelingly* demonstrative argumentation, it is difficult to decide in what dilemma the *sagacious reasoner* ought to hold a rank. It will, however, appear manifest to every intelligent mind that has escaped the bias of the "one idea," that by this appeal to the *acute sensibilities* of those who have expe-

destined to supplant the long confirmed principles of existing medical science, then may

---

rienced a "blow" on a boil, or other species of inflammation, the writer has hoped, by the re-excitement of the agonizing twinge, (when listening to his teachings,) to smother the reasoning, by an appeal to the sensitive capacities, and therefore falls into the category of the knave; or, (which is equally inexcusable,) that he is utterly deficient in a knowledge of the vital phenomena and laws controling the animal economy, whether in health or disease, rendering him, consequently, incompetent for the office of the physician; and, therefore, that he legitimately ranks with the empirical pretender.

Such must necessarily be the conclusion formed regarding the assumption above presented. Those but moderately versed in the science of physiology and pathology, are doubtless aware that the instance, so complacently adduced, is one in which mechanical causes are often effective in its production; and its attendant, acute sensibility, (so *feelingly* depicted,) is solely the result of mechanical irritation of the local nerves of the part affected, produced by an embarrassed or altered circulation within the diseased space; the consequent accumulation of fluids, causing pressure or distention; and the changes of structure constituting the disease. In cases where the inflammation is sufficiently extensive to involve the system in the diseased sympathetic action, an inordinate torpor of the general functions result, in consequence of the withdrawal from these of a portion of their ordinary vital energy, and its concentration upon the disordered part, for the temporary sustentation of its embarrassed vitality. This is proved by the attendant general languor, headache, torpor of the digestive functions, &c. In this state, all *experience* proves, that increased quantities and more energetic qualities

it be admitted, that science, like dynasties and political institutions, is subject to revolutions

---

of remedies are requisite to produce a given amount of action than is demanded in a state of healthy function.

The causes of disease are, unquestionably, of a debilitating or sedative character, and their operation ever tends to a suppression of the vital power. Hence inductive reasoning teaches, and all experience derived from observation correspondingly proves, that doses of medicines efficient in a state of health, generally (in a greater or less degree) fail to arouse the desirable and requisite energies in the system, when torporized by the causes of general disease. There are few sufferers from the ordinary bilious affections who are not aware, from painful experience, that common cathartic doses, to prove effective, often require a repetition of from two to twenty-fold the quantities required to produce the same degree of effect in health or the slighter ailments. Cramp of the stomach, and other spasmodic or neuralgic affections, are known by all witnessing or experiencing the intense sufferings therefrom, (whether physician or non-professional,) to require, and the system is well known to tolerate, in such cases, quantities enormously increased beyond those ordinarily administered in the milder affections and in health. In fact, in these and many other of the most grave affections, but little or no degree of influence toward their removal is obtained, except from quantities of remedies which would prove extremely hazardous of administration to the same subjects in a condition of health.

Indeed, few instances of the more grave diseases exist, (not excepting severe inflammation, though a local affection,) in which observation, substantiated by all rational experience of the effects of medicines, does not infallibly prove, that the causes of disease have so depreciated and diminished the vital energies of the

from slight incidental causes; and that no production of the human mind approximates to stability. In such bewildering and deplorable contemplation of mental imbecility, we must be compelled to consider universal experience of mankind, but as a suspected aggregation of error, the more mischievous and dangerous because strengthened by lapse of time and concurrence of numbers in its capricious dogmas. Indeed, in this drama, in which the human mind is represented in characters so humiliating, the senses appear as without other standard than individual caprice, and reason itself but as a mental principle, whose conclusions possess a like instability with its subtle creative rival, imagination.

But no such depressing view of the instability of all mental products, need be entertained. The rationalist may still, with confidence, expect a confirmation of the principles so ardently collated and compiled, as those constituting the basis of medical, as well as its collateral sciences; while no prophetic vision is required to confirm his convictions, that ho-

---

system, as to require a power in remedies additional to that abundantly effective in health or slight affections. This is generally indispensable to excite their requisite action in the several organs, when torporized and embarrassed by formidable disease.

mœopathy, like its kindred empirical systems, though enabled probably to sustain a brief existence through its successive periods of juvenility, adolescence, and senility, will pass unhonored to the tomb of its predecessors—where its congenital epitaph,

REQUIESCAT IN PACE,

has ever been legibly enstamped, for the view of every reflective observer of the frailty of its structure.

SECTION VIII.

Mesmerism.

Society has recently been surprised by the announcement of a new agent in mental science, termed mesmerism, which, from its intricate and unexplained principles, may well be ranked with the occult sciences of the middle ages. Like alchemy and astrology, it can claim no support from any known data, or even analogies supplied by the ordinary properties or laws of matter and mind. Although it has not yet claimed the introduction to the astonished senses of invisible personalities, like those evoked by the wand of the magician, or the conjuror, yet by manipulations equally enigmatical, termed passes, it affects the manifestation of hitherto latent entities no less mysterious, which, if inferior in corporiety, possess energies no less potent than their more defined ghostly rivals, educed by the necromancer. It need not be stated, that the mesmeric empiric assumes the ability to communicate his own ideas to the mind of his patient, whose individual identity he claims to have fascinated by the charm of his mysterious passes to an amalgamation with

his own, and made it obedient to the influences by which his own is governed; and that in this condition, an intercommunication of thought is effected without the aid of signs addressed to the senses, but by the agency of his personal volition alone. By such extraordinary pretensions, it will be perceived that the entire agency of the senses in originating ideas in the mind, may be dispensed with; and that instead of these being the exclusive channels through which the mind takes cognizance of agencies exterior to itself, mesmerism has traced an avenue of mental perception, by which its power is manifestly exaggerated above that which it derived from grosser sensible influences. This must appear to any one possessing a knowledge of the mental properties, or even with the ordinary operations of his own mind, too ridiculous and absurd to require a serious refutation.

It announces a principle of mental perception, or a mode of originating ideas, wholly at variance with any known laws governing mind; holding, it is true, an analogy with its manifestations in dreams, visions, and supernatural revelations, but essentially differing from either, and far surpassing them all in mental prodigies exhibited. Dreams, it being understood, consisting in fanciful combina-

tions of former sensations in store in the mind, while the others are affirmed to consist in direct impressions of ideas, by means of an extra-natural agency, acting through ordinary sensations and intellect; while mesmerism, by its prescribed conditions and formal gesticulation, affects to suspend the volition, sensation, and intellect of its recipient, and to convert *her* mind into a mental mirror, by which is reflected, not only the ideas of the actor, but the shadows of the invisible present and the future are depicted in outlines more definite than those delineated through the prophetic inspiration of the scriptures.

Now the principles upon which all the asserted phenomena of mesmerism depend, after deducting the collusions of its empirical pretenders, are undoubtedly the same which have been noticed in all ages as erratic sympathies occasionally manifested in individuals of excitable nervous systems, when subjected to influences of a novel and unwonted character.

It has not been sufficiently considered by the admirers of mesmerism, that a collusion is possible between the manipulator and the mesmerised, through which a language of signs may exist, by means of which each, in their exhibitions, is understood by the other, and upon which it is presumable most of its

pretended phenomena are dependent. Even a tedious discipline would not be required, to enable individuals of ordinary intelligence to adopt signs, based upon vocal inflections, emphasis, and intonations, together with modes of questioning and other significant action, by which interrogations relative to the greatest variety of objects and ideas, might be answered with an accuracy equaling the most astonishing coincidences which have been exhibited by the mesmeric mountebank as proofs of his pretended science.

Without a detail of the singular history of particular cases of somnambulism, which have ever been of occasional occurrence, independent of the aid of manipulations, and previous to the pretended existence of a special mesmeric art, we would refer to hysteria and catalepsy, nervous affections often excited by mental emotion, in which are exhibited occasionally erratic phenomena, no less singular than the *real facts* which mesmerism, in subjects suitably organized for its experiments, undoubtedly may effect. But the former are manifested without the aid of the imposing mysterious gesticulation, the induced sympathetic emotion, the faith and credulity of the patient, which must be admitted as essentially contributing to the induction of the phenomena of the latter. Ecstasy, trance and cho-

rea,* with their singular manifestations, may be mentioned as presenting irregularities in

---

* Those curious to learn some of the singular phenomena of the nervous system, when in a disordered state, may find such detailed in several cases of these affections (viz. trance, chorea, &c.) mentioned in Blackwood's Magazine, No. 379, for May, 1846. These cases occurred and were treated as grave nervous affections, and as they were mostly anterior to the era of the recent art of mesmerism, of course they will not be claimed as eductions of its artificial formalities. A double consciousness characterizes most of these cases; i. e., the patients, (who were females,) when affected, lost the consciousness of what had passed previous to the attack, and, vice versa, had no knowledge of their acts during the intervals. In three cases mentioned, one by M. Petatin in 1787, one by M. Delpet, 1807, and one by Dr. Despine, 1829, the patients "*did not see with their eyes nor hear with their ears. But they heard at the pit of the stomach, and perceived the approach of persons when at some distance from their residence, and read the thoughts of those around.*" Another case is mentioned, the subject of which "*could read by the touch alone; if she pressed her hand against the whole surface of a written or printed page, she acquired a perfect knowledge of its contents. A line of a folded note, pressed against the back of her neck, she read equally well. She called this sense-feeling.*"

Similar cases have ever abounded in medical history, and, although great allowance is doubtless to be made for collusion and deceptions, sufficiently adroit to escape the detection of spectators, and often their medical attendants, enough remains as reality to exhibit the occasional extraordinary perversion of sensation, and the extreme acute susceptibility of the senses, when influ-

mental action, of an extraordinary, and occasionally of a most marvelous character. Epilepsy often occurs from sympathy, on witnessing others affected with the real disease, as occurred among a large number of factory girls in Lancashire, England. This sympathetic affection originated from a female, who became affected with spasms, in consequence of a mouse being mischievously placed in her bosom, by one of her companions. Large numbers witnessing the disorder, were in like manner affected, and it even extended throughout the neighborhood and its vicinity, and did not terminate for a considerable period. The dancing mania,* which occurred in Europe in

---

enced by certain diseased conditions of the nervous system. There is little doubt, however, that in most cases where the ordinary sphere of the senses has been thus extensively enlarged, a vanity to astonish by marvelous exhibitions has induced the patients, (either by a collusion with friends, or by individual suggestion,) to add a variety of deception to their disordered abilities, for the purpose of promulgating a reputation which they were conscious it was within their power to acquire through the extraordinary acquisition.

* This affection commenced, and was attended throughout its course, with an irresistible propensity to dance. It was considered a purely nervous affection, and was propagated by sympathy or imitation, on witnessing others affected.

A case of imitative cholera convulsions was related to the author by a credible spectator, which occurred on a

the fourteenth century, and continued a period of some years, was a sympathetic disorder, in which the strange abnormities of the nervous system became manifest to a most alarming extent.

Witchcraft, when prevailing as an epidemic, as has frequently been the case in all civilized countries, aroused the erratic elements of the mind, and led most of society to a belief that they were the witnesses, and in many instances even the subjects, of the marvelous tales which emanated from the illusion.

Sympathy is one of the inexplicable phenomena of animated beings, which has ever attracted the attention of philosophers.—— Through this influence, the lulling motion of a carriage, the placid water-fall, the silent motion of forests agitated by the gentle breeze,

---

Mississippi steamboat in 1833. An individual, a fellow-passenger of the narrator, in a cabin conversation on cholera, profanely expressed his disbelief of the horrid spasms and convulsions usually attendant on the disease; and after an oath expressing a wish to disprove such by personal observation of a case, pronounced all such relation a humbug. He was soon after called to be a spectator of a severe case of cholera, occurring among the passengers on deck. After intently gazing a few moments at the fearfully convulsed invalid, he fell on the deck in convulsions similar to those witnessed, which, however, subsided on his being conveyed to bed, without other characteristics of the disease being manifested.

with a variety of other motions, tend to and often effect placid sleep. Such are simple effects produced upon an organism so adapted to the arrangement of nature, that health and enjoyment may be derived therefrom.* But

---

* It may be here stated, for the information of the general reader, that the term sympathy, as employed in this work, is generally used in its physiological or medical signification. It is one of the most prominent facts in physiology, that by a mutual interchange of nerves, by which the cerebral influence is conveyed throughout the system, such intimate connection exists as to cause each organ to partake of the affections of its congeners, whether diseased or healthful.

The mental structure of man is such, that not only his corporeal structure generally, participates in its affections, but through its influence the entire organic action is prone to assume an affection similar to that manifested in its associates, whether of a healthful or disordered character. This sympathy between the several organs, as well as that operating externally, generally holds a correspondence with the exalted susceptibility, or the ordinary healthy state of the nervous system.

In view of such controling influence of the nervous system on the organic economy, and of the efficacy of mesmerism, in many instances, in arousing those dormant sympathetic energies, which are often indicative of predispositions to nervous disease, it may not be an unprofitable suggestion to its professors, that when, from a subsidence of its novelties, its profits become lessened, it be proffered as a test, or (if the coinage be allowable) *pathometer*, by which such state may be detected, and perhaps by their aid, hysterics, with some other equally grave nervous affections, may be pre-announced to the inquisitive of future health and prospects.

when we consider the mesmeriser, armed with his ridiculous but affectedly mysterious passes; the prescribed fixed position of the patient's eyes upon those of the operator; and the novel condition of the credulous expectant of a mysterious effect; aided in most cases by an overpowering faith in expected changes about to be induced by the necrotic display of the manipulator, it is little surprising that those of extreme nervous susceptibility should yield their powers, by means of such imposing influence, to a state of torpor, like that recently termed mesmeric sleep. There is no doubt, that the induction of this state by artificial means is possible, and may have really been effected by the agency of the mesmeriser. But there is little reason to doubt, that with this effect his personal agency terminates; and that the remainder of the manifestations of mesmerism, exclusive of a collusion between the actor and the recipient, are but accidental effusions of irregular trains of ideas, such as exist in the mind of a dreamer during a disturbed and unnatural state of sleep. This form of sleep would be that likely to succeed the active mental influence alluded to, and its phenomena would more naturally be elicited by an address to the partially wakeful senses through the actor by whom such state had been adduced. But it is

probable that most of its visible demonstrations result merely from a concerted collusion between a knave and an impostor, who conduct the jugglery. Indeed, the realities of this art, instead of being a newly discovered principle in physiological or psychological science, is but a compilation of long known facts, wrought into an art, and invested with a sufficiency of marvels to impose upon the public credulity, for mercenary or other sinister considerations.

The frequent confessions of mesmerists, that their art is inadequate to derive its phenomena from a considerable number of individuals, upon whom its efforts are exerted, ought to confirm skepticism in its disbelief of the claims which it proffers. It affords the strongest grounds for the presumption, that the subjects who are *really* impressed by its influence, are those whose nervous systems have acquired a morbidly susceptible state, while the apathetic or unimpressible, are those in whom it has retained its healthy equilibrium.

It is an undoubted fact, that the brain and nervous system of very many individuals, especially those of the more delicately formed females, though in a state of apparent regularity of function, are, in some degree, actually in a morbidly susceptible condition.

This state has generally been induced through the almost innumerable exciting causes which exist, and are operative throughout all civilized communities; and as the aboriginal tribes are little subject to like affection, it may be conceived that they are evils which civilization suffers as a penalty for the vices which it originates and cherishes.

This constitutional imperfection is unquestionably derived from a great diversity of causes. Among these may be enumerated, the predisposition derived from hereditary transmission. It also has been the product of agencies originating through the manners and customs of refined societies, such as the unnatural and inordinate exercise of the passions, in prosecuting the objects of a morbidly aspiring ambition for the imaginary boon which the distinctions of wealth and honors confer. It has likewise originated from the intemperance of fashion and appetite, as well as from the various wants and privations which abound in all civilized communities. All these, by opposing a counteracting influence to a healthful action of the natural laws of the animal economy, tend to effect a derangement of the normal vital functions, and to induce, if not actual disease, at least those unnatural susceptibilities of the nervous system, which essentially control their manifestations.

Such, it is presumed, are the efficient influences to which mesmerism is indebted for the *real facts* by which it sustains its mountebankery, as well as medical history for the manifestation of erratic sympathies, by which many grave diseases are simulated, and often made formidable. By these the effects of remedial agents are made abnormal, and they, doubtless, develop for contemplation the almost innumerable moral obliquities, such as are exhibited in wild fanaticism, and the various extatic excitations and delusions, which have baffled the speculation of moralists and metaphysicians, in their attempts to systematize the mental operations.

Instances in corroboration of the above position, relative to the influence of sympathy and imagination upon the nervous temperament, in the production of phenomena of a similar character to those of mesmerism, might to any extent be adduced; but a further detail is deemed unnecessary. The pretended prophetic abilities of persons in a mesmeric state, their acquirement of new faculties and perceptions, such as the ignorant evincing a knowledge of the organic economy, its derangements, and the appropriate remedies, superior to that of the most scientific physician, are absurdities which it would be humiliating seriously to attempt to refute.

With such view of the animal economy and its occasional manifestations as an attentive research into its history furnishes, it will appear obvious, that all the pretensions of mesmerism are founded upon the exceptionable phenomena of the nervous system; and that its *actual exhibitions* are but a solicitation of these, by the imposing formulary which it employs.

It will therefore be perceived, that the principal merit which the originators of the art can justly claim for the pretended discovery is, that by their ridiculous mummery they have been able to arouse dormant sympathies, which may be conceived indicative of those latent conditions of the animal economy, termed predispositions, which hitherto were mainly unfolded by the more active exciting causes of disordered action.

Had mesmerism, and the exploded phenomena once claimed as being obedient to the metalic tractors of the celebrated Perkins,*

---

* Perkins was an American, who, a[illegible]t the close of the last or commencement of the present century, pretended to have made the discovery that certain steel instruments, styled metalic tractors, constructed in a prescribed form, and charged with magnetism, *a la mode Perkins*, possessed the ability, in his hands, by certain peculiar strokings over the body, or at the parts affected, to beguile the disease from its habitation, and thereby

existed as cotemporaries, there is little doubt that each might have derived powerful aid from a union; or, perchance, had their respective claims assumed an attitude of rivalry, a contest would, probably, have ensued for precedence, terminating both more speedily, through the efforts of their respective friends to expose the follies which constituted the principal facts upon which each was based.

It is certainly a deplorable contemplation, that such irrational claims as those presented

---

cause it to be ejected from the system. The author, after effecting numerous *infallible cures* on his countrymen, who possessed sufficient faith in the marvelous power of his tractors, and from whom he reaped no inconsiderable pecuniary harvest, visited England with the view to test their efficiency on the distended pockets of the more wealthy Englishmen. His prospects there became highly flattering, until a distinguished but *envious "regular"* threw his tractable reputation into convulsions, by mischievously employing, on some credulous converts to tractoration, instruments of wood, formed and painted to represent the real tractors, which proved equally salutary in their effects with the magical reality of Perkins. The author's professional and pecuniary vitality remaining after these malignant experiments, became completely extracted by an ingenious burlesque poem, entitled "Terrible Tractoration," assailing the unlucky tractors, written by Thomas Green Fessenden, an author of burlesque notoriety. The unfortunate Perkins returned to his country after this signal failure in his contemplated projects, a striking memorial of popular gullibility and the fate of imposture.

by mesmerism, should attract other attention, in an intellectual period like the present, than a speedy consignment of its promulgators to a rank with the impostors who have, too successfully, ever made traffick of the simplicity of the injudiciously confiding and credulous of all communities. That mesmerism, however, with all its pretensions and wonders as a new and distinct science, is destined to be numbered with the delusions with which the present age is affected, cannot be a matter of rational doubt with those physiologically investigating its character.

If evidence was required to show that the public mind is, at this time, far from being in a rationally healthy condition; that it is subject to the dictates of passion and imagination, rather than of reason and common sense; reference might be made to the success of the various fanatical systems of religion, and the innumerable political theories, which have been, and are perpetually invented, and which are attracting to their standards adherents in this and other countries. For illustration of this, we need but instance the success which has attended Mormonism, Millerism, Fourrierism, Socialism, and various others too nu-

merous to mention. So successful have been the promulgators of such systems, in acquiring proselytes to doctrines, however ridiculous and absurd, that it would not be inapt to liken society to an infinitely chorded instrument, the vibration from any chord of which is capable of deriving a response, in harmonious unison, from the minds of some individuals composing its entire mass.

A

PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAY

ON

ANIMAL FASCINATION, OR CHARMING.

A common belief exists with a large portion of society, that serpents, and some other animals of a formidable character, are armed with a mysterious power, termed fascination, or charming, by which they exert a silent but efficient and destructive influence over their marked victims, which is operative through a space that would render nugatory the ordinary power which they possess for their arrest.

Although it may not be strictly proper to consider such belief either as a credulity or superstition, yet as it is believed that this is one of the erroneous notions which have been derived from, and is dependent upon physical causes, existing principally in the victim of its supposed influence, and not from the existence of a real power in these animals themselves, any further than as being objects of dread and apprehension, it is, therefore, deemed not unprofitable to notice this asserted singular power, as a correlative of these, which has contributed its aid to the variety of fallacies

proceeding from their prolific fountains of mental error.

Whatever may be the facts upon which the belief in fascination, as a distinct animal power, is founded, it is most probable that the deductions therefrom are erroneous; and that these, instead of being adequate to establish such conclusions, ought to be viewed but as manifestations of faculties which all animals exhibit in a manner adapted to the varied conditions of their existence.

If a belief in the real existence of ghosts, of witchcraft, or mesmerism, is to be alone tested by the apparent facts which are adduced in their support, their reality, as a consequence, must be admitted. But if (as is believed to be the fact) these can be shown to be illusions, emanating either from a disordered condition of the optic nerves, or the brain; from an excited imagination; or from an occasional singular manifestation of a diseased nervous system; then their existence as distinct agencies becomes annihilated, and they are to be considered merely as diseased, or abnormal actions, which vitality, when under peculiar influences, or when in an unnatural state, exhibits. So if it can be made to appear as probable, that the facts adduced in support of fascination, as a distinct and singular power attributed to some animals only, are but the varied exercise of a

sagacity, which all, in a greater or less degree, possess, then the marvel of such incomprehensible agent ceases, and the mind is led rather to admire that superior wisdom which has devised such a wonderful adaptation in the economy of living beings, without resorting to a profuse multiplication of agencies in effecting its preservation.

It is a characteristic of the mind, to invest with extra-natural power whatever excites its extreme dread and apprehension. This mental trait is more especially manifested when the cause of such affection is rendered difficult of investigation, either from the dangers with which it is attended, or from the subtleties and mystery by which it is enveloped. Thus death, to the philosophic spectator of the event, presents but the natural phenomena incident to the cessation of organic action; yet to the ignorant and credulous it often excites the notion of such extra-natural influences, superinduced at the period of dissolution, as to render it an object of superstitious dread and apprehension.

The most deadly poisons have ever, by credulity, been invested with qualities allied to the marvelous, such as have never been verified in any substance in nature. But scientific analysis, by designating and defining their real properties, has mostly dispelled the mystery which once magnified their powers;

and these, though now viewed as formidable agencies, excite but a small degree of terror, in comparison with that derived from their magical history.

There are no members of the animal kingdom, however formidable many may be to man, that excite such natural abhorrence and dread, as do those of the serpent species. This affection, although mainly derived from their formidable and dangerous character, is, no doubt, essentially aggravated (in the view of many) by associations derived from sacred historical evidence regarding their agency in effecting original transgression, so vitally affecting human destiny. Such views and agency, associated with the observation of his wily instincts, together with his naturally repulsive form and singular actions, have, beyond doubt, presented the serpent species to the ever prolific imagination, as endowed with qualities more mysterious and formidable than any other species.

It may perhaps be objected, that was fascination an imaginary power, derived from such source, it ought alone to be manifested in formidable animals, and not in those less noxious, as the feline, or cat species, and some others, ordinarily viewed with indifference. But it may be answered, that a character termed formidable, is to be estimated but in

view of the relations that exist between the various species; and that these relations can alone be determined from observation of the natural hostility of animals, and the modes by which the stronger effect the destruction of their weaker adversaries. In all cases of the existence of these hostile connections, there is little question that the superior are viewed by the inferior kinds, in an attitude no less terrible and dangerous, than are the most venomous of the serpent species by man.

Was the asserted power of fascination a real endowment of any animal, it might rationally be presumed, that it would be employed on all occasions, and at all seasons when the promptings of appetite were instant and urgent; which is evidently far from being the fact, as ordinary physical force is that generally employed, both by serpents and the feline kinds, in arresting the animals on which they prey.

The species that are the reputed victims of fascination, such as the smaller birds, squirrels, &c., (from which most instances of the exertion of this singular faculty are derived,) generally seek the vicinity of the dwellings of man, at their periods of rearing offspring, probably from the instinctive or acquired consciousness, that most of their more powerful

adversaries avoid such localities. It is in these situations where most of the cases of supposed charming are brought within observation. Although various instances to the contrary may doubtless be adduced, it is presumed that attentive investigation will demonstrate, that the victim is ever within the parental domain which the intruder has invaded. It is likewise believed, that the season when its operation has been mostly observed, is that of propagation and rearing of their young. If exceptions occasionally occur, it is, most probable, where individuals of species have accidentally been delayed in the exercise of this important annual instinct. At this period, these animals furnish indubitable evidence, that parental anxiety and solicitude often lead to a disregard of the ordinary love of life, when the safety of their offspring requires its hazardous exposure for their defense.

It is mainly from analogical evidence, derived from observation of similar habits in different species, and of some phenomena asserted to have been tested by the experience of a few of the human species, in their connection with reptiles, that the power of fascination has been claimed as an endowment possessed by cats and other less noxious animals. As instances which have been witnessed

are of most rare occurrence, the question of its existence, as a distinct faculty, becomes narrowed to a degree, that the most rational doubts may well be entertained whether it does not admit of explanation, as being a varied operation of faculties possessed in common with predatory animals generally.

It is worthy of consideration, in a discussion on this more than doubtful faculty, that it is not claimed as being possessed but by a very limited number of species,—and these are invariably such as in ordinary physical armature, for the arrest of their objects of prey, are adequately endowed, without the superaddition of such faculty to secure the necessities for their existence. Indeed, in a comparison, they appear to surpass most other animals in their offensive and defensive armor. An argument might therefore be adduced against the existence of such attribute, from a speculation upon the compensating equalities which the divine economy has ever been recognized as observing, in its supply of endowments to the animal kingdom. Such provisionary compensation has not only arrested the attention, but it has excited the admiration of every attentive observer of the animal, and even the vegetable kingdoms.

In such view, speed, instinct, or intellect, will ever be found as antagonistic to superiority of

strength and armature; and separate or severally, have been exercised with sufficient success to insure the perpetuation of the species possessing them. Were it otherwise, or were such a dangerous invisible agency as that of fascination, superadded to the ordinary powerful armature of animals of such ferocious dispositions as the asserted wielders of fascination, it might well be questioned whether the existence of species, against which its influence was exerted, could be for any considerable period insured; more especially in the localities inhabited by their highly gifted antagonists.

If further facts were required to show that the admission of a faculty, like that presented by fascination, was a figment of the imagination, derived from the formidable affection of animals to which it has been attributed, as well as its furnishing an exceptionable deviation in the manifest principle of the divine economy in supplying endowments to animals, it may be stated, that it has been supposed to be possessed only by the small portion of the serpent species, which are the most formidable, in consequence of their dangerous properties, while the weaker and inoffensive varieties, that are viewed with less dread, but possess a similar organization, and consequently similar necessities, are supposed wanting the important

provision. It will therefore be perceived, that this view confers on some members of the same family, a multiplicity of power for providing sustenance and defense, whilst others, in comparison, are greatly defective in means for sustaining their organic wants.

The scriptural history of the serpent, as well as many of his peculiar structural actions and habits, have ever enshrouded his character in no inconsiderable degree of mystery. It is, therefore, not singular that the imagination should have invested him with properties deviating from those of other animals. Nor does it present a singularity in mental association, that a mysterious power, once admitted, should be applied to all such animals as effect the aims of their nature through analagous influences, however baseless, in fact, may have been the notion that originated the belief of its existence.

It is not denied that phenomena similar to those believed to exist as effects of a fascinating power, have been apparently manifested by some animals toward the victims of its supposed influence. But as it is inconceivable that an agent should be operative in circumstances and in a form like that in question, an attempt will be made briefly to elucidate the phenomena presented, by principles furnished from the more familiar attributes of the

animal economy. Although, in the view taken, a marvelous and incomprehensible power may be dissipated, yet an explanation of the *real facts* of fascination may be afforded, more accordant with the known vital laws.

The ability is asserted for the fascinating animal, to present to its supposed spell-bound victim, colors the most enchanting, and the acquirement of such control of the senses and mental faculty, that an irresistible impulse operates to urge the victim, involuntarily, to a horrid destruction, which, in the unbiassed state of the mind, is, above all others, the most repulsive and terrible. Even with the irresistible impulse to approach the danger, a resistance is, for a period, instituted by an antagonistic dread, which vainly strives in resistance of the foe, and only yields the contest to a multiplication of the impalpable power, and by the continued efforts and approach of the deadly charmer.

For the purpose of showing that during the exhibition of effects like these, the supposed fascinator exerts but a passive agency, except that imparted by the influence of his naturally formidable character, and that the operating cause, by which such effects are produced, exist mostly in the apparent spell-bound victim, reference will here briefly be made to physical facts of a less mysterious character,

which are presumed capable of producing similar phenomena, and which are believed adequate to solve the mysterious enigma of animal fascination.

It is a principle in optics, familiar to those versed in the science, that an intense view of any one of the original or compound colors, for a period varying in different individuals, produces a change of the image of the color first formed on the retina, and in its stead is introduced that of a color opposite, or varying from that first apparent. This phenomenon is what is termed occular spectra, or accidental colors, and may at any time be made to appear by intently observing, as for example, a red color, for a sufficient time, on a white ground. In this instance, the red will diminish in brilliancy, and a yellow spectrum will appear on the white ground by averting the eye thence. In like manner, by the substitution of different colors, different spectra will be exhibited, as blue for orange, white for black, black for white, &c. Such change occurs, it will be understood, in all the colors, when placed on opposite ground to that of the color first made the subject of experiment. This change is, doubtless, to be explained from the fatigue induced upon the fibres of the optic nerve, by means of the unusual stimulus of the vivid image acting on the retina. It will be

readily perceived, that by the action of this natural optical phenomenon, in a steady view of objects of variegated colors, a constant succession of changes in the several tints will occur,—capable, in many cases, of presenting to the mind a splendid variety of brilliant and pleasing hues.

Fear, when operating in its greatest intensity, undoubtedly holds the strongest and most engrossing influence over the intellect of any of the mental affections. Such is the control which it exerts over the mind, when inordinately aroused, that the influence of reason appears suspended by an induced temporary insanity, and the animal thus affected, is often involuntarily and irresistibly impelled into the danger which it is its object to avoid. Such is often the effect of this blind passion, that safety (which is the object of its specific action) becomes sacrificed in the bewildering vortex created by its deranging influence.

In the explanation of the phenomena of apparent fascination, what more rational can be given, or what more accordant with the state of facts presented, than that which is capable of being derived from the optical phenomena alluded to, aided by the physical effects susceptible of being induced by fear, when in a state of extreme stimulation? It is principally the most formidable reptiles, such

as the crotilus horrida, or rattlesnake, the cobra, or hooded snake, and a few others of the most venomous character, and therefore the most excitant to fear, which are supposed to be invested with the power of charming. This fact is worthy of being borne in mind in the explanation of the phenomena of fascination, as here proposed to be given.

The variegated colors of most poisonous reptiles, as the rattlesnake, &c., are adequate to explain the reputed dazzling and changing hues, said to be presented by the charmer to the charmed, during the unaverted view which his situation would be likely to elicit, and which, it is understood, is an indispensable condition for the operation of the fascinating influence. No condition can be conceived more favorable for the presentation of the above noticed ocular phenomena, or none in which the bewildering effects of fear would be more likely to be induced, than that in which the timid are placed, when in dangerous proximity with so formidable a foe as a deadly reptile. The intense gaze, with an extremely excited imagination, would not only be likely to confer intensity on the ever-changing hues of the ocular spectræ presented to the astonished vision, but the deranging influence of fear would, doubtless, be manifested in the

excitable subject, to a degree rarely effected from any other causes.

It may even be conceived, that the visual changes of hue, to those unacquainted with their true character, (particularly in the nervously susceptible,) might be adequate to the production of a temporary distraction of the intellect. But when, in addition, we have to consider the accessory aid which these influences acquire from the engrossing affection of fear, it is not surprising that such concurrence should be productive of a temporary suspension of all the faculties of the mind, or that they should suffer derangement to such a degree as to cause them to act in contravention, both to the salutary decisions of reason and the ordinary promptings of the instinct of self-preservation.

The physiological effects of colors alluded to, would unquestionably be greatly enhanced under circumstances of great excitement from terror, originating from objects of vision, and in all cases would be likely to act as a subsidiary disturbing cause to that emotion, so efficient in influencing mental action. More especially might this be expected, when, in addition to the necessary requisite, an unaverted gaze, was that of mental excitation to the extent of abstracting the attention and concentrating it upon the exciting object. In

connection, therefore, with the extreme operation of the passion, fear, there can be no doubt but the influence of this phenomenon would bear a prominent agency, and essentially modify the results ordinarily produced by the former; but it is assumed, that it acts merely as an adjunct to the engrossing passion, to which all the principal effects are to be attributed. That the popular notion of extremely dazzling hues, with their enticing influences, said to be presented by the fascinator to his victim, are in a great degree fictitious exaggerations, is most probable; but that the former actually occurs in some cases of human subjects, when excited by a formidable reptile, is not inconsistent with the optical facts alluded to, and therefore may have been actually represented.

As further proof that the apparently variegated colors, which are reputed to surround the fascinator, are but natural optical illusions of the subject of his influence, in the presentation of which the former is an entirely passive agent, may be adduced the fact, that the inferior animals, which are far the most frequent victims of the supposed charm, probably possess in no considerable degree a perception of the beauty of colors. And as it is evident that they are but slightly, if at all, endowed with sentiment and imagination, on

which the finer sensibilities are dependent, it cannot be these influences upon the intellect that essentially effect the fatal results.

Whatever, therefore, may be the character of the affection termed fascination, whether excited, as is asserted in the human species, by serpents, or in minor animals, as squirrels, birds, &c., by the same, as well as animals of the feline species, it is reasonable to suppose that the mental influence is the same by which their powers are involuntarily brought into subjection to their deadly foes.

It is extremely probable, as before asserted, that in all cases of apparent affection by the power in question, whether proceeding from reptiles or other animals, it is a sense of their formidable attributes which alone impresses the intellect of the victim. It is, therefore, evidently the impression made by fear upon the mental faculties, which mainly effects such bewildering and exhausting derangement as to deprive the intellect of the ability to exercise its ordinary provisionary caution, and impels to dangers which its unbiased action ever admonishes to avoid.

Fear is a passion with which all animals, but more especially the weaker, are endowed; the final cause of which is self-protection and preservation. In cases of danger, when aided by the deliberative faculties, it

adopts the most efficacious means for the accomplishment of this important object. The design of the endowment is the same in all animals, whether made subject to reason or instinct, and as its object is to prompt to efforts for safety in danger, where the deliberative faculties would often be inefficient, its action is often simultaneous with the sense of peril by which it is stimulated. But it occasionally happens that the extreme effects of the emotion is so powerful, from an instant sense of the magnitude of danger presented, that the salutary provision, caution, becomes paralyzed and inoperative, or the action which it institutes becomes so perverted, that its final aims are frustrated. The faculties of the mind and admonitory instincts, are prostrated to a degree, that they are unable to institute salutary decisions, and the entire animal impulses act with an incongruity which presents them as destructive, rather than salutary monitors.*

---

* A much esteemed friend of the author, of accomplished mind and high attainments in the legal profession, of a nervous temperament and delicate health, in a conversation on the influence of extreme fear, informed him that, on overlooking a precipice, an involuntary impulse ever prompted him to pass over the declivity, although, in the act, inevitable destruction was depicted. An experience of similar impressions, from a sudden view of like danger, has not unfrequently been

Instances in illustration of the effects of the extreme action of the passions and emotions, but more especially that of fear, may,

---

stated to the author, and probably is not unfamiliar to the reader. The melancholy death of a lady, the wife of a distinguished clergyman, at Trenton Falls, a few years since, by a precipitation into the chasm and waters beneath, has been imputed to the influence mentioned, and, perhaps, affords the most satisfactory explanation of that mysterious event. The deranging influence of the strong and sudden emotion of fear, as well on the senses as the mind, is thus beautifully illustrated by Shakspeare's description of Dover Cliffs:

——————— "How fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs, that wing the midway air,
Shew scarce so gross as beetles. Half way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire; dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
The fishermen that walk upon the beach,
Appear like mice; and yon tall anchoring bark,
Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy,
Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,
That on th' unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes,
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong."

These facts, in illustration of the influence of sudden fear, in effecting derangement of the mental faculties, are appropriate evidence to show that the same influence, aided by the circumstances mentioned in the text, are adequate to explain the phenomena, as well as their effects, witnessed in the apparent state of charming by animals.

Anger, as a passion nearly allied to fear, as regards its instantaneous operation on the mind, when stimulated by unexpected occasions for its action, often effects

to any extent, be adduced. Thus the human mother will plunge into fire or water, to grasp her infant perishing in those elements, thoughtless of the consequences to her own safety. Death is often sought, and effected, in the extreme distractions of grief, in counteraction of the instinctive love of life; and despair, from sudden and irretrievable losses, often impels to a voluntary self-immolation. Many animals, in extreme and sudden fright, in their attempts for safety, often destroy their lives by the incautious means employed. The partridge often plunges against buildings or trees, by which its destruction is effected, when excited by an instant representation of danger. The horse refuses to leave his burning stall, and if compelled to a place of safety, rushes back to destruction, when not secured by restraint. Various other instances of the disastrous effects of excessive and sudden fear might be mentioned, but it is presumed that they will readily be suggested to the reader. Indeed, general observation will attest, that

---

temporary derangement of the faculties. In this state the mind becomes so deprived of the power of deliberation, as to produce like disastrous results with the latter. Both, when stimulated by sudden and inordinate causes, are often converted into the most destructive agents, thereby becoming perversive of the objects for which they were manifestly designed by the Creator.

both instinct and intellect, the natural conservative agents of life, often become the most ready instruments for its destruction, when dangers are presented in attitudes that disconcert the influence which they ordinarily hold over their dependent organs.

All animals are endowed with admonitory instincts, which prompt to the embrace of appropriate means for securing a supply of their systematic wants, as well as for the protection of themselves and their offspring.—This monitor, doubtless, directs some animals, such as the reputed charmers, or those that prey upon the weaker species, to excite in their intended victims the extreme emotion of fear, for the purpose of their arrest; either by assuming before them a terrific attitude, thereby directly disconcerting their powers of escape, by the overwhelming influences of instant jeopardy; or it directs them to seek a position in the vicinity of their young progeny, to excite apprehension for the safety of these, and thereby induce an exhausting struggle in their defense.

This induced exertion, aided by the distracting influence of parental solicitude, while it renders them reckless of individual safety, effects an exhaustion of their bodily powers that not unfrequently terminates in their fall-

ing victims to parental affection.* Even the school boy will attest to the bold and persevering efforts of the most timid parent bird. in the resistance made to his incursions upon the domain of her progeny, and the daring exposures of her individual safety in their defense. But when the danger arises from her natural enemy, the reptile or the cat, her efforts are increased in reckless daring, to a degree proportionate to her instinctive consciousness of the deadly designs of the adversary. The wily intruder, sensible that perseverance will most likely effect his design, patiently awaits the period when, through exhaustion, or wild desperation, she ventures within his grasp.

---

* The love of offspring, as often manifested in the human and other species, often equals that of life, and when brought into conflict, the former not unfrequently predominates. When extremely aroused by imminent perils to which its object is exposed, it often prompts to effort for protection, equally vigorous and daring as when personal safety is the consideration. This strong and engrossing passion is most manifest in animals when their young are in the stage of rearing, in which helpless state few animals will abandon them when endangered by their natural or other foes, until resistance becomes hopeless by their destruction, or their own powers yield, through their protracted struggles in their defense.

That the asserted fascinator is a passive agent in effecting the changes acting upon the victim of his influeuce, either in presenting variable hues, or other factitious representations deviating from those originating from ordinary animal endowments, is rendered certain from the fact, that the more calm and indifferent beholder witnesses no deviation whatever, either in his ordinary colors, or other natural qualities, any further than those which his ordinary instinct, or experience, might suggest as most suitably adapted for the arrest of his prey.

Every species of animals evidently possess instincts operating in some degree diverse from those of others, which are to be viewed as wise adaptations to the wants and abilities of the organic structure of their possessors. That the few species, therefore, represented as charmers, should exhibit actions, when employed in procuring sustenance, deviating from others of a different organization, need not surprise the observer of general animal nature, since similar deviations in animal attributes will be found characterizing most other kinds, which, if less marvelous in consequence of being viewed as immediate stuctural operations, are no less mysterious and inexplicable. If many of these have not been referred to a power having no sensibly material origin, like that of

the conceived power of fascination, it is probably for the reason, that their accompanying phenomena have failed to impress the mind with the requisite marvels and mysteries which the latter is better calculated to generate. Such mysterious character is proved by all observation to be a necessary aliment to sustain a belief in whatever is obscure, incomprehensible, and difficult of investigation by the senses.

The power under consideration, in the light in which it has been presented, admits of explanation, as an ordinary faculty, either by viewing it as an original sagacity supplied by intellect or instinct, or that these have been improved by the experience of a long succession of their species, in localities and under circumstances deviating from those for which their original natures were destined.

This improvement and accommodation of animal attributes, as well instinct as intellect, is exhibited in most species when translated to situations in which the natural objects on which they subsist are deficient. As it is an obvious fact, that most kinds of animals, from various accidents, have been extensively dispersed from their original locations, there is great reason for believing that many kinds have acquired greater or less additions to the sagacities with which they were originally supplied.

A reference to either or both of the above suppositions, may afford an explanation of the artful sagacity which leads serpents, or other supposed charming animals, to locations where their contemplated victims are employed in the rearing of offspring, that by exciting the conflicting instincts in the manner stated, they may be subdued by the artful device, and the captor be enabled to secure a supply of his wants from a source that his natural organic abilities would seem to render him otherwise hopeless of obtaining. In a physiological view of the subject, therefore, the conclusion, from the state of facts, is nearly imperative, that the reputed state of fascination, with all its attendant phenomena, is but a mental, or perhaps in the lower species, an instinctive bewilderment, effected by the deranging action of extreme passion. This may, perhaps, be aided in some cases by the optical illusions noticed, when in dangerous proximity with a formidable and deadly foe, in which state a lively sense of imminent peril so operates upon the intellect, as to produce a temporary hallucination or derangement of the natural faculties, or so disorders the action of the self-protective instincts, as for a time to abolish the ordinary physical ability to secure safety. In this condition the victim is impelled, involuntarily, to rush into the formidable danger, (by a striking sense of which, the deranged

state of the intellect has been induced,) even against the admonition of the will and the instincts, which, in a state of deliberation, promptly admonish a retreat from its precincts.

If, therefore, all the actions of animals in the assumed state of fascination, as well as those by which this condition is induced, are susceptible of a reference to the operation of their ordinary but generally incomprehensible instincts, passions and intellect, it certainly is more rational to resort to the intricate though admitted organic action that originate these, for an explanation of the celebrated phenomena, than to refer them to a still more inexplicable and incomprehensible power, the existence of which is a mere assumption from a series of extraordinary actions witnessed, to which are imputed energies capable of being operative far beyond the ordinary organic or physical force of the agent by which they are exerted.

In the intricate phenomena of nature, it is altogether more philosophical to have recourse to known facts, and where these are deficient, to analogies, for their solution, than by abandoning such, because inadequate for their entire explanation, to assume the existence of animal properties which neither matter or mind are known to possess. Indeed, this must be conceded as the only justifiable mode of

reasoning, especially when the opposing facts are mere conceivable existences, incapable of being reconciled with any of the recognized laws by which either are governed.

The above being an admitted position, it of course follows, that if the facts apparent in the assumed state of fascination are susceptible of an explanation, as being ordinary manifestations of instinct, passion, or intellect, with one or all of which every animal is evidently endowed, it is unphilosophical to reject these ordinary animal properties in attempting its solution, for the reason only that they may appear inadequate to explain its minor phenomena. This view is far more rational than that which admits a new agency for its production, which neither holds a similitude with any of the affections admitted as legitimate animal attributes, nor in fact is susceptible of being derived from any known property or law of animal nature.

If such a principle is admitted as legitimate in the science of life, there is reason to apprehend that the truths dependent upon physiological science will be involved in obscurity; and, indeed, that the natural sciences generally, instead of arriving at the state of development which their friends and cultivators have anticipated, are in danger of failing in their attainment of that exactness from which their greatest utility can be derived.

CONCLUSION.

It is to be regretted that, in this enlightened age, the propensity for the novel and the marvelous should be permitted so far to obscure reason and judgment, as to prevent a reference to known phenomena or facts, for an explanation of whatever appears new, strange, or mysterious; more especially when such is opposed to all sensible and rational experience.

The various illusions of the senses, and the impositions which have ever been practiced to deceive mankind in less enlightened ages, ought to admonish us not to give our assent to pretended discoveries or speciously constructed systems, which are discordant with common observation and general experience, without a deliberate examination. By a neglect of such caution, there is danger that evils similar to those alluded to, as having been instrumental in earlier periods in retarding mankind in their progress toward true knowledge, should have the like effect on the present age. Every age has had its peculiar superstitions and objects of credulity, which have flourished and held a duration proportionate to the ability of their promulgators to sustain their character for novelty, and the drapery of mystery which

concealed their deformities. This essential aliment to credulity has been well understood and applied by designing knaves and impostors, to obtain the ends of their unholy ambition; and observation too clearly manifests the success which has attended their experiments on popular credulity. To attest this fact requires but a reference to the attention and popular approbation with which the pretended discoveries alluded to are generally received. Such are the varieties of nostrums and panaceas of the quack, of mesmerism, of fanatical sects in religion, together with the almost infinite variety of other worthless inventions and fictions of the imagination, which knavery is perpetually devising, and which are thrust upon the public by their inventors with an arrogance and impudence unparalleled, except in the history of charlatanism.

These are too commonly grasped with avidity by the devotees of novelty, to the no small detriment of their interests and intellectual claims.

Each nostrum or superstition enjoys, in turn, a period of ascendency sufficient to accomplish the selfish object which led the impostor to its invention. Each has succeeded in a degree proportioned to the ability of its inventor to sustain its occult character, and each invariably has declined in a ratio having corres-

pondence with the loss of this essential requisite for success.

Such is the uniform character which history and observation furnishes of credulity and superstition, and such the arts and machinations with which designing impostors, in every age, have approached the weak and the credulous, with designs upon their interest and welfare. It may well then be asked, whether, in an enlightened period like the present, with examples so abounding as those furnished from past ages, the time has not arrived when it would be proper to review our position by the light which the past furnishes; and before we ridicule past generations for their errors and delusions, furnish evidence that we, though perhaps in other forms, are not in a like category, and therefore in danger of being jeered in turn by our successors, for the errors which we foster and cherish.

If such happy result as the banishment of error from the entire mass of society is ever accomplished, it can alone be effected by allowing reason a legitimate predominance over the passions and imagination, that it may be enabled to separate truth from falsehood, by the standards which it is capable of furnishing. Such exercise of reason, aided by experience and a healthy operation of the senses, would divest knavery and imposture of

their mystery and marvelousness; and the impostors, who weave their detestable fabrics, would be shorn of their ability to prey upon the interests and happiness of the species in which they claim a rank. By allowing the native faculties of the mind this salutary exercise, a test might be afforded by which the line of demarkation between truth and error would be defined; reason would assume the governance of mental action; impostors, with their arts and delusive systems, would be consigned to merited obloquy; and the progress of society would be onward toward that perfection for which the Creator manifestly designed the human species.

THE END.